

**“ANGLO SIKH RELATION AFTER THE DEATH OF
MAHARAJA RANJEET SIINGH (1839-1849) A
CIRTICAL STUDY”**

**“ਮਹਾਰਾਜਾ ਰੰਜੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਕੇ ਪਸ਼ਚਾਤ ਆੰਬਲ ਸਿਖ ਸੰਬੰਧ
(1839-1849) ਏਕ ਆਲੋਚਨਾਤਮਕ ਅਧਿਯਾਨ”**



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Guide

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Dedicated to my Grand father

“Late HAJI FIYAZ UDDIN”

Certificate

This is to certify that the Thesis entitled "**ANGLO SIKH RELATION AFTER THE DEATH OF MAHARAJA RANJEET SINGH (1839-1849) A CRITICAL STUDY**" "महाराजा रंजीत सिंह के पश्चात आंग्ल सिख संबन्ध (1839-1849) एक आलोचनात्मक अध्ययन" is an original research work prepared by "**SHAFIQ UDDIN**" under my supervision. The candidate has put in work and pittance as required under the statutes.

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Perface

The gallantry nature of the Sikhs have always attracted me to study the history of Sikhs with Guru Nanak the Sikhs stood against the tyranny of Mughals. All ten gurus of Sikhs brought social reforms and Political consciousness among Sikhs. Guru Govind Singh founded the Khalsa and transformed the Sikhs from saint to Soldiers. After Guru Govind Singh Banda Bahadur led the Sikhs. He fought various battles with Mughals. After him grew Misls become the political unit in Sikhs. One of prominent misls was Sukharchakiya Misl. Ranjeet Singh was born in this Misl. He grew as a brave ruler and occupied all the misls and formed Sikh empire in the whole of Punjab. The English feared him and they concluded the treaty of Amritsar with him.

After his death they had the desire to annex the Punjab. They hatched conspiracy and through first and second Anglo-Sikh war they occupied Punjab.

This is the story of bravery, treacherous and conspiracy. The last independent kingdom of Punjab became part of British Empire. Here I have concluded that just because of lack of leadership the Sikhs were defeated.

The famous poet shah Mohamad has rightly said that

***“Aaz Ek Sardar Banjo Fauza
Jit Ke Aj Hariya Hai”***

I here with just of all thank my teacher Dr. Joga Singh Hoti, HOD History Deptt., Bareilly College, Bareilly without whose guidance this work would have never been completed. I also thank to my teacher Miss. Kalpana Singh and Dr. Rupali Sona.

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SHAFIQ UDDIN

Rise of Sukharchakia Misl & Maharaja Ranjeet Singh

Budha Singh an affluent Jat farmer of the village of Sukarchak in the Maiha tract of the Punjab, was the first historically known ancestor of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh. His original name was Desu.¹

On his death, Budha Singh left behind two sons, named Naudh Singh and Chanda Singh, the latter being the ancestor of the Sandhanwalia Sardars of Raja Sansi.²

In 1749 Naudh Singh was wounded by a gun shot in the head while fighting against the Afghan invaders. The wound did not prove fatal but he was incapacitated and he lingered on for a few years without participating in the Sikh movement in the Punjab and died in 1792.³

Naudh Singh had four sons: Charhat Singh, Dal Singh, Chet Singh and Maghi Singh. At the time of his father's death in 1752 Charhat Singh was 20 years of Age.

Charhat Singh, to start with, was in the Bhangi dal but soon thereafter he began to nurse, in his heart, political ambition and came out of the Bhangi contingent and declared himself as holding an independent status.

Charhat Singh strengthened his fortress at Gujranwala.⁴ His possession began to assume the shape of a strong Misal, not so easy to reckon with.⁴

In a short period of fifteen years, Charhat Singh became the master of Gujranwala, Wazirabad, Ramnagar, Sialkot, Rohtas, Pind Dadan Khan and the areas of Dhani and Pothohar which gave him a good amount of revenue.⁵

Charhat Singh left behind a son, a daughter and his widow, Mai Desan. Mahan Singh being too young to handle the state administration of step mother Desan took over the reigns of the

administration of the Sukarachakia Misal.⁶ In the words of Gordon, Sikh ladies played an important part in the history of these warlike times.... And Mai Desan ruled with vigour and diplomacy.⁷

Mahan Singh was born in 1760. He inherited a state from his father, though small in size, but had all the attributes of an independent principality.⁸

Finding the Sukarchakia Misal in its ascendancy, Sada Kaur, widow of Gurbakhsh Singh Kanaihya, proposed in 1786, the betrothal of her only daughter, Mehtab Kaur, to Ranjeet Singh, the young son of Mahan Singh.

The Sukarchakia chief was having a failing health due to overwork and exhaustion and in the course of the siege of Sodhra when the victory was just in sight he was suddenly taken ill by a violent attack of fever. Handing over the charge of the siege to his ten year old son Ranjit Singh, Mahan Singh retired to Gujranwala where he expired on the 5th Baisakh, 1847 BK, corresponding to April 15, 1790 as a result of severe dysentery.

After his father's death Ranjit Singh succeeded to the chiefship of his Misal. Only at the age of nineteen he occupied Lahore and put his Misal on the road to glory of a consolidated Kingdom of the Punjab. His rule gave to the history of Punjab a remarkable era of independence, pride, magnificence, security and stability.

Ranjit Singh was born on November 13 1780 at Gujranwala. Very little is known about his childhood except that he had a virulent attack of small pox which deprived him of his left eye.

In 1795 at the age of 15, Ranjit Singh got himself married to Mehtab Kaur, daughter of Sada Kaur.

Ranjit Singh was the only son of Sukerchakia chief Sardar Mahan Singh. He was born on 3th November, 1780.⁹

The Sukerchakia Misal was founded by Budh Singh who had been baptized by Guru Govind Singh. He belonged to village Sukerchak near Gujranwala now in Pakistan. He took possession of some villages in his neighbourhood. His son Naudh Singh expanded his estate. Charat Singh, his son and successor, shifted his

headquarters to Gujranwala. By now Sukerchakia was an important Misal whose raids reached as far as the city of Jammu. It was here that Charat Singh was killed by the bursting of his musket in his hands.¹⁰

Charat Singh's son Mahan Singh married the daughter of Gajpat Singh of Jind. It strengthened Mahan Singh's position among the rival Misls and it was out of this union that Ranjit Singh was born.

Ranjit Singh was only 12 years old when his father died. At fifteen he assumed control of princely matters. Kanhiya Misl which was then headed by Sada Kaur, his mother-in-law exercised great influence over him during the earlier years of his reign. He married a second time in the Nakai Misl. He made an alliance of friendship with another powerful Misl, the Ahulawalia, by making friendship with its chief Fateh Singh Ahluwalia. Apart from these three, the only powerful Misl that remained were the Bhangis. Ranjit Singh decided to force the Bhangis and other powerful Misls to accept his overlordship.¹¹

Apart from the Sikh Misls, the other powers which counted were the Afghans, the hill chief Sansar Chand of Kangra, the Gurkhas and the Marathas.¹²

Ahmed Shah Abdali's grandson, Shah Zaman, sat on the Kabul throne, Following in the footsteps of his grandfather he invaded India in 1796. He had promises of help from the Pathan rulers of Kasur, Shaib Singh of Patiala, the Rohillas and the Wazir of Oudh. The Sikh chiefs gathered at Amritsar to discuss the situation. They selected Ranjit Singh as their leader for fighting the Afghan invader who was now camping at Lahore. Shortly after this Shah Zaman heard of troubles at home and decided to return to Kabul.¹³

He came to Lahore again in 1798 and sent a column to Amritsar where Shikhs under Ranjit Singh were waiting. Ranjit Singh met them outside the city and after a fierce encounter forced them to retreat. Ranjit Singh's fame shone as a star; In 1799 he entered the Lahore fort to rule his kingdom from there. This infuriated the Bhangis who along with the Ramgarhia Misl advanced to Lahore. Ranjit Singh met them at Bhasin, ten miles east of Lahore. However the Bhangi chief died of drinking before fighting could take place and the invading army

dispersed. After this victory Ranjit Singh attacked Jammu. The Raja agreed to pay tribute.¹⁴

On April 12, 1801. he assumed the title of the Maharaja of Punjab, Baba Sahib Singh bedi who was widely respected among the Sikhs for his piety as well as his valour, anointed him with a saffron Tilak. Ranjit Singh did neither wear plume on his turban nor sat on a throne. He held Darbar seated cross legged in a chair Guru Nanak.¹⁵ The Government was called Sarkar Khalsaji and the court Durbar Khalsaji. Unlike a king, he wanted to be addressed only as Singh Sahib. He paid equal respect to all religion, on Basant Panchmi he visited the tombs of Sufi Saints Hussain and Madho Lal.

He attacked Kasur and made the nawab pay heavy indemnity. He also captured the towns of Naurpur and naushera belonging to the Kangra ruler Sansar Chand. He took pindi Bhatian and Chiniot in northwest from their Muslim Chiefs. He attacked Multan. Muzaffar Khan, however, recognized him as the sovereign and agreed to pay the revenue to Lahore instead of Kabul, which he was doing earlier.¹⁶

Amritsar is a very important commercial city apart from being the holiest city of the Sikhs. Various parts of Amritsar were held by different families, Bhangis being in possession of the fort of Gobindgarh. Ranjit Singh took the city and the fort and gave pension to the Bhangi widow, whose husband had died of drinking at Bhasin. He gave a grant for Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) to be rebuilt in marble and covered the dome with gold leaf.¹⁷

As Ranjit Singh's fame spread many people started coming to him for employment, among them were the deserters from the East India Company. On seeing them march and obey words of command Ranjit Singh realized that the success of the British armies lay in their superior discipline. He took the deserters into his employment to train the infantry units. So far the emphasis had been on the cavalry only. He also strengthened his artillery. The Sikhs learnt to cast guns and canon balls.¹⁸

The campaign of 1803 which began on the highest standards of training for all the branches of his army, was personally supervised and rewarded by Ranjit Singh.¹⁹

Between 1800 and 1806 A.D. the English came much closer to the Punjab than they had ever been before. They defeated Rai Sahib Scindia, the Maratha chief and became the masters of Delhi. Later they defeated Holkar and his Rohilla Ally Amir Khan. The former came to Punjab to seek Ranjit Singh's help hotly pursued by the English General Lake who camped on the Beas river. Ranjit Singh called a meeting of the supporting Holkar. On the first of January 1806 Ranjit Singh signed a treaty of friendship with the British agreeing to expel Holkar. The British agreed to respect his possessions.²⁰

A dispute arose between Patiala and Nabha States regarding village Daladi. Ranjit Singh was invited as an arbitrator. Ranjit Singh's verdict was accepted by both the sides which increased his influence across the Sutlej.²¹

Sansar Chand of Kangra asked for Ranjit Singh's help against the Gurkhas under Amar Singh Thapa who had besieged Kangra. Ranjit Singh sent his troops and the Gurkhas retreated to Mandi.²²

The Nawab of Kasur rebelled against Lahore. Ranjit Singh attacked Kasur in February 1807 and the fort was taken. The Nawab

was forgiven and given a Jagir at Mamdot on the other side of river Sutlej. Kasur was placed under the direct administration of Lahore Darbar.²³

Tara Singh Gheb, Chief of the Dallewalia Misl died about this time. Ranjit singh annexed his estate which included Rahon, Nakordar, etc. Pathankot fort was conquered as also Jasrota, Chamba and Basholi. The Raja acknowledged the sovereignty of Ranjit singh. Sialkot, Gujrat, Sheikhupura and Naraingarh were also taken.

Let us now have a look at some of the important officers in the civil and military employment of Ranjit Singh. The most important were the three Bokhari brothers, eldest of whom Azizudin, became the Maharaja's closest friend and adviser and later Minister Maharaja's closest friend and adviser and later Minsiter of foreign Affairs.

The other two were Immamudin and Nurudin. Another important person was Akali Phual Singh who had helped the Maharaja in many victories. Mohkam Chand, a distinguished General came to Ranjit Singh from Bhangi Sardar of Gujrat. He was the son of a Khatri tradesman of Kunjah. In 1808 the Maharaja took into his service a

Brahmin youth from Meerut named Khushal Chand. He later became Khushal singh and was put in charge of the place. He later brought his nephew Tej Singh who played a treacherous role in the Anglo-Sikh wars.²⁴

While there was now no danger from the Afghans in the north who had earlier been a constant source of trouble, there was now a new power in the east, the British. They had eliminated the Marathas and were the masters of the whole of India except the Punjab and Sind. In Europe, Napoleon was conquering one country after another and Russia had treaty relations with him. The British began to fear an attack by them namely Metcalfe, to negotiate with Ranjit Singh in view of this common danger. Metcalfe was with Ranjit Singh for a long time. He met him first at Khem Karan and continued to trail him in his victorious march to Faridkot, Malerkotla and Patiala.

He was with him at Amritsar and then at Lahore. In the meantime, the British had secretly marched a detachment of troops to the Sutlej to put pressure on Ranjit Singh to accept a treaty offered through Metcalfe.

This treaty in 1809 recognized his sovereignty over his kingdom north and west of Sutlej but allowed him only just enough troops on the south and east as were necessary for police purpose. Malwa area was thus brought under British rule and protection.²⁵ It was cut off from Lahore Durbar the frustration in Lahore aroused by this treaty was cleared by the occupation of the Kangra fort. Kangra was attacked by Gurkhas under Amar Singh Thapa and its Raja Sansar Chand asked for Ranjit Singh's help in exchange for the fort. The Gurkhas retreated, and the maharaja appointed Pahar Singh Man, as the Governor of Kangra. Later the maharaja took Shahpur Miani and Bhara. In February, 1810 he took Khushab and the fort of Kutch from Baluch Chief Jafar Khan and Sahiwal from Fateh Khan. Jullunder was taken from the Singhpurias and Chunian, Dipalpur, Sharakpur and Kamalia from the Nakkais.²⁶

Shah Shuja, the king of Kabul and a grandson of Ahmed Shah Abdali had been dethroned by his rival Shah Mahmud. He came to Lahore to seek Maharaja's aid to get back his throne but did not get any response. He also wanted Multan which traditionally belonged to Kabul. Ranjit Singh, therefore, attacked Multan. He took the city but

could not take the fort. Its ruler Muzaffar Khan agreed to pay a nominal tribute.

Shah Mahmud of Kabul now sought Ranjit Singh's help to subdue Kashmir where Shah Shuja, the king's rival, was a prisoner. Kashmir was taken by the joint expedition and Shah Shuja, with the famous diamond Kohinoor in his possession, was taken to Lahore. The Afghans kept Kashmir. Shah Shuja surrendered the diamond to the maharaja.

In July 1813 the Sikhs attacked Attock, which had been in foreign possession since the time of Mahmud Ghazni, and captured it. This was a big victory for Lahore durbar and was joyously celebrated. As against this a campaign against Kashmir in 1814 did not meet with much success.²⁷

Multan was an important town commercially as well as strategically and was the headquarters of the Province. It was held by Nawab Muzzaffar Khan and was under the external control of Kabul. Ranjit Singh had tried to conquer it a number of times but succeeded only in exacting a light or heavy tribute. On the 14th of July 1818, a

large force under the leadership of Prince Kharak Singh and Misr Dewan Chand was sent to conquer Multan. The Nawab shut himself in the fort and gave a determined fight. The Nihangs under the command of Sadhu Singh fought with great valour. A breach was at last made in the fort and the Nawab fell fighting. This was the second great victory won over the Afghans, the first being at Attock.

In May 1819, a large force under the command of Prince Kharak Singh and Misr Dewan Chand was sent to conquer Kashmir. A fierce battle was fought at Sopayan in which the Afghan rulers of Kashmir suffered a defeat. On the 14th of July, the Sikh forces occupied Srinagar. After the conquest of Kashmir the maharaja conquered Dera Ghazi Khan and Dera Ismail Khan in 1820.²⁸ The most important conquest of Ranjit Singh was the acquisition of Peshawar. In 1818 he sent an expedition of Peshawar. The Afghan governor left the town as the Sikh troops entered the city. Ranjit Singh gave Peshawar to Jahan Dad Khan, governor of Attock, and returned to Lahore. After he came back jahan however, offered to pay a tribute to Lahore and accepted the Maharaja's sovereignty. The matters were, Peshawar. Sikh armies again moved towards Peshawar Sikhs won.

Akali Phula Singh was killed there. Ranjit Singh again gave Peshawar to Yar Mohammed Khan, as Governor, and returned to Lahore.

Sayid Ahmad Barelvi, who claimed to be a Caliph, whipped up the fanaticism of the Muslims and Afghans and stirred trouble in the frontier region. Hari Singh Nalwa defeated Sayid Ahmad at Saidu. Sayid Ahmad was able to gather strength again and took Peshawar. Ranjit Singh sent another expedition under prince Sher Singh and General Ventura. Peshawar was re-conquered. In 1834 Hari Singh Nalwa was appointed governor of Peshawar.

In 1835 Dost Mohammed, the Afghan ruler took Peshawar. Sikh forces again marched on Peshawar, Dost Mohammed yielding without a fight. In 1837 Dost Mohammed fought the Sikhs at Jamraud. Hari Singh Nalwa was killed in the battle. However the Sikhs continued to hold Jamraud in addition to Bala Hissar and Shabkadar, not to speak of Peshawar.²⁹

The relation with the British continued to be good till the early nineteens when there was tension on Ferozepur. Ranjit Singh laid a claim to it which the British refused. The question of Shikarpur and

Sind widened the gulf. If the Maharaja could not expand towards the east because of the treaty of Amritsar of 1809, the natural direction for the expansion was towards the west. But the British would not allow him to expand even to the south west. They wanted to have control of it themselves because of its commercial importance. Burnes, the political agent at Lahore, took a gift of five horses and a coach sent by the King of England for Ranjit Singh by the river Sind so that he could study its commercial value further.

The Governor General, Lord Bentick, decided to establish his control over the Sind but in order to allay the fear of Ranjit Singh he arranged a meeting with the Maharaja at Ropar. It was a colourful affair extending over several days. When the meeting was going on at Ropar a British agent was negotiating a commercial treaty with the Amirs of Sind. Thus they forestalled Ranjit Singh by establishing supremacy over Sind.

In 1836, the Maharaja got an opportunity to invade Sind because one of the Sind tribes, Muzaris, had invaded a Sikh outpost.

The Maharaja after defeating the miscreants advanced to capture Shikarpur for which city he had a fascination. But the British prevented him from doing so. The gulf between Ranjit Singh and the British was further widened on the question of Ferozepur. The British occupied it in 1835 and converted it into a military cantonment.³⁰

In 1839 the British decided to put Shah Shuja on the throne of Kabul in order to get an ally against Russians who were expanding towards Asia. A tripartite treaty was proposed by them to Ranjit Singh by which the British and Ranjit Singh were to help Shah Shuja to get the throne from Dost Mohammed. Ranjit Singh signed the treaty but rejected the proposal for the British armies to pass through Punjab. So long he lived he maintained his independence, and realizing his limitation, he preserved the Sikh state.

In 1822 two officers of Napoleon's army, Ventura and Allard, came to Lahore to seek employment with the Maharaja. Earlier an English deserter named Price had joined service in 1809. He was followed by some other, mostly half castes or Anglo Indians. Ranjit Singh was not enthusiastic about such officers because he was not sure of their loyalty in the event of war with East India Company. The

only foreigners he could rely on were the French, or those who at one time or another had fought the British.³¹

Within a few years of Ventura and Allard joining service, there were dozens of Europeans of different nationalities in the employ of Maharaja. They were given higher wages than the Indians of similar rank and special conditions were imposed on them. They were expected to domesticate themselves in the country and were encouraged to marry native women. They undertook to fight any nation against which Lahore Durbar was at war, even though it may be their own.

Most of the Ranjit Singh's conquests had been made before 1822 by men like Mohkam Chand, Hari Singh Nalwa and Misr Dewan Chand. Even after that, the effective command of the war was retained in Punjabi hands. The Europeans were not fully trusted and very rarely more than two were allowed to be in the capital with their troops at the same time.³²

Apart from Vantura and Allard, there was an Italian officer named Avitabile, who was made the Governor of Peshawar.

Frenchman Court used to cast guns at Lahore foundry, and the American Harlan and the Hungarian Hornigberger were the others. The most important result of the employment of the Europeans was rapid increases in the size of the army, particularly the infantry and the artillery.

Since all the major conquests had been made, the army had to be maintained out of the revenues, which did not increase. Men were recruited not individually but in batches from the same village. Thus the senior member of the family or the tribal elder who introduced the men to the service, joined as officers instead of being promoted by merit. A new kind of army unit, consisting of between fifteen to twenty men grew up. These men were banded together in deras (camps).³³

With Europeanization an anti-English sentiment grew in the Durbar army. A great number of the senior foreign officers hated the English. Though friendship existed on the surface there was an undercurrent of hostility. The Maharaja knew that the Amirs of Sind, had been brought round or coerced into signing treaties with the British. The Afghans were also approached by them with similar proposal. Punjab was encircled from all sides by the British.³⁴

On its part, Lahore Durbar received emissaries from the court of Heart which conveyed to the Maharaja that the Russians were anxious to have a treaty with Punjab. Emissaries from Nepal were received with marked favor at Lahore. There was an exchange of courtesies with the Maratha Chiefs and the Nizam of Hyderabad. Durbar's claim over territory across the Sutlej was discussed with the British. These were conceded in the case of towns which were strategically unimportant to the British, such as Anandpur, Chamkaur, Kiratpur and Machhiwara, but the claim over Ferozepur was rejected.³⁵

When the Sikhs were being encircled from all sides, they advanced on a side the English could scarcely expect. It was northwards into Ladakh. General Zorawar Singh, who was posted at Kishtwar took advantage of a family quarrel of the rulers and moved into the State. He put one of the claimants into possession on his undertaking to pay a tribute of Rs. Thirty thousand annually to the Lahore Durbar and occupied some of the strategically placed forts. In the winter of 1836, Zorawr Singh appeared before the Maharaja with the tribute and sought permission to advance further westwards to

Iskardu to make a common frontier with China. The Maharaja advised him to hold his hand for the time being.

To Put Shah Shuja on the throne of Kabul, an expedition called the grand army of the Indus was organized. The Maharaja and the Governor General were to review it in December 1839, at Ferozepur. There were parades, festivities and exchanges of presents. During these festivities the Maharaja was stricken with paralysis and could neither rise from the bed nor speak. He struggled for life for six months. By the middle of June there was no hope of recovery left. Kharak Singh was appointed Maharaja with Dhain Singh as his chief minister. The Maharaja died on the 27th of June, 1839.

The Maharaja's body was cremated the next day. A funeral pyre of sandalwood was erected and Rani Guddin, daughter of Sansar Chand of Kangra, sat down by the corpse placing the head of the Maharaja in her lap. There other Ranis and seven slave girls seated themselves around without showing any fear or nervousness. Sikh, Hindu and Muslim prayers were recited. Kharak Sigh lit the pyre at 10 O'clock and the Ruler of the Punjab, with four Ranis and seven girls, was reduced to ashes.³⁶

Ranjit singh is the most popular figure in the history of Punjab he was of medium stature with dark brown complexion he had small pox marks on his face, and this disease had also taken one of his eyes. He wore a long grey beard. When asked by a British officer at Simla from which eye the Maharaja was blind, Fakir Azizudin replied, the splendor of his face is such that no one has looked closely at his face. He was a superb horseman and spent about ten hours a day in saddle. He was a man of great courage who personally led his men into the battle. He was called the Lion of the Punjab. He himself wore plain clothes but insisted that courtiers wear their regalia and jewellery in the Durbar. He loved the open country and spent his morning hours riding out on the river side or in some garden.

Ranjit Singh did not receive any education, but he respected men of learning and satisfied his craving for knowledge by asking searching question. Jacquemont, a French, wrote about him, "His conversation is like a nightmare. He is the first inquisitive Indian I have seen, and his curiosity balances the apathy of his whole of his nation. He had asked me a hundred thousand questions about India, the British, Europe, Bonaparte, this world in general and the next, hell,

paradise, the soul, God, the devil and a myriad of others of same kind.³⁷

As a king he did not lose the common touch or sympathy with the peasant folk. He forgave people who had wronged him and rehabilitated enemies he had vanquished. Never in his entire life did he sentence a man to death, not even an Akali fanatic who tried to assassinate him. According to Major Lawrence, the Maharaja Summed up his achievements in these words, now large.

It was scattered, broken, divided, it is now consolidated. It must increase in prosperity and descend undivided to my posterity. By counsel and providence, combined with valour, I have conquered, and generosity, discipline and policy I have regulated and consolidated my government. I have rewarded the bold, and encouraged merit whenever it was found on the field of battle I exalted, with my troops I have shared all dangers and fatigues. Both on the field and in the cabinet I haut partiality from my soul and closed my eyes to personal comfort. Sri Akal Purakhji, (God) increased his power, so that his territory now extends to the borders of China and the limits go up to

the Afghans, with all Multan and the rich possessions beyond the Sutlej.

Sir Lapel Griffin writing about fifty years after the death of Ranjit Singh wrote: His name is still a household word in the province, his portrait is still preserved in castles and cottages. It is a favorite subject with the ivory painters of Amritsar and Delhi. Men obeyed him by instinct. The Control which he exercised, even in the closing years of his life, over the whole Sikh people, nobles and priests, was the measure of his greatness.³⁸

The Maharaja maintained a splendid court. Its magnificence had been noticed by many visitors. The Maharaja would sit on a chair with silver arms and its legs served as throne. Sometimes he wore the Kohinoor diamond on one of his arms. The courtiers were generally clothed in every diversity of colour and in every imaginable variety of picturesque costume. This is the observation of Stienback who says. All that the imagination can conceive of human grandeur, all that the most exuberant fancy can devise in its endeavour to portray the acme of royal splendor, was embodied in the Durbar of Ranjit Singh.³⁹

The Maharaja sat in the centre and all the courtiers, except the princes and a few ministers, were required to stand by his side. The three persons who sat on the chairs were Prince Kharak Singh, Prince Sher Singh, and Dhian Singh's son Hira Singh. Behind Ranjit Singh's chair stood Raja Dhian Singh, the prime minister, and on the side sat Faqir Azizudin, the foreign Minister and other ministers. All others kept standing. Most of the conversation in the court was done in Punjabi. Proceedings and official drafts were recorded in the court.

Kharak Singh was the eldest son of the Maharaja. He was born in 1802 of Mai Nakkain. Ranjit Singh gave him the commands of the expeditions of Multan and Kashmir. Sher Singh was the son of Maharaja by Kanhayia princess Mehtab Kaur. He took a prominent part in the frontier wars and it was he who killed Sayid Ahmed Brelvi.

Fakir brothers have already been described. Azizudin according to Stienback was very able negotiator, insidious beyond measure, a complete champion of the science of eloquence. He almost always formed the head of the missions as they were occasionally sent. His other most important duty was to interpret the Maharaja's words. A few inarticulate growling of the old lion were enough to vilify the

Faqir's imagination. He was indeed the last of the indigenous diplomats of Hindustan, one of those men whose skill in this art had been so much in evidence for so long.⁴⁰

The Dogra Rajas, Dhian Singh, Gulab Singh and Suchet Singh occupied very high positions in the Lahore Durbar. The most influential was Raja Dhian Singh who joined as an ordinary cavalier. He was appointed the head of the Deorhi Department after Jamadar Khushal Singh's term. He was anti-British and did not like Maharaja's pro-British policy. He was not sincere to Ranjit Singh's dynasty and after the Maharaja's death, he and his elder brother Raja Gulab Singh became instruments of the ruin of the Sikh power in Punjab.

Gulab Singh was the most cunning of all. He was often charged with rebellious attitudes but was forgiven through the intervention of Dhian Singh. During the First Sikh War he turned a traitor and after its conclusion, bargained Kashmir from the British. Dhain Sing's son Hira Singh was a great favorite of the maharaja. He held the office of the prime minister under Maharaja Dilip Singh for about a year and half. Among the Sikh Sardars. Hari Singh Nalwa occupied the most prominent position in the court. Born at Gujranwala he was one of the

most skillful and brave generals of the Maharaja. He earned fame in the frontier wars and his name became a terror for the Pathans. He was killed in 1837 while fighting the Pathans at Jamraud.

Desa Singh Majithia and his son Lehna Singh were also among the well-known courtiers of Ranjit singh. In 1809 Desa Singh was appointed the governor of the hill states of Kangra, Madi etc. and he held that office till his death. After his death, his son Lehan Akali Phula Singh was another notable at the Durbar, who showed his worth in various battles. Sham Singh Attariwala was another notable Sikh member of Lahore Durbar. He figured prominently in the battle of Sabraon in which he died a hero's death.⁴¹

Jamadar Khushal Singh, his nephew Tej Singh, Misr Diwan Chand. Mohkam Chand, Diwan Moti Ram, Diwan Ganga Ram Diwan Bhawani Dass, Misr Beli Ram and Raja Dina Nath were well known Hindu Chiefs in the Durbar. Besides these there were the European generals.

All these courtiers in varying degrees exercised some influence on the Maharaja. He was not egoistic but open to advice. Besides the

mystic entity called the Panth, Sikh commonwealth was very powerful and anyone could speak on its behalf. The Akalis, in particular, took advantage of it and their leader Phula Singh once summoned the Maharaja to Amritsar at Akal Takhat on some minor lapse on the part of the Maharaja and ordered him to be logged. Ranjit Singh accepted the punishment however, it was not carried out and the Maharaja was let off.

For the purpose of administration Ranjit Singh had divided his kingdom into four Subas or provinces. They were Lahore, Kashmir, Maultan and Peshawar. The head of the province was called Nazim. Multan was given to Sukh Dyal Khatri and later to Sawan mal Kashmir was given to Moti Ram, son of Diwan Mohkam Chand and Peshawar was given to Hari Singh Nalwa. Each district was held by a kardar or Collector. He was mainly a revenue official and his chief duty was to collect revenue and deposit it into the state treasury. Besides, he was a judicial and administrative officer. For most offences he would impose a fine. The Kardar was also responsible for maintaining law and order in his locality. The lowest unit of administration was the village. Which was mainly run by the Panchayat Jagirs were, however, an exception where the Sardar or Chief enjoyed vast powers.⁴²

The main source of Ranjit Singh's income was from the land revenue. Batai or sharing was the popular system of assessment. The revenue collectors at the end of each harvest would go to cultivators and take the State share in kind. Kankut or appraisal and jaradari or farming were the two methods by which an estimate of the gross produce was made while the crops were still standing. According to the latter, the land was given on contract to the highest bidder for three to six years.

The state share of the produce, from fertile and rich lands was different. Sometimes that state share was as high as fifty per cent, but it was never below one third from any type of land. According to Ranjit Singh's biographer, Dr. Sinha, the revenues of the country might have been strained by this system of taxation but in some respects the government gave back with one hand what it took with the other. The employments of the state were numerous and every Jat village sent recruits for the army who sent their savings home.

The Maharaja was very particular about justice. He regarded the dispensation of justice as one of his foremost duties. He made extensive tours and heard appeals. A number of stories are still

current in Punjab which describe Ranjit Singh's love of justice. In important towns the Maharaja had set up higher courts of justice. There was an Adalat-i-Ahla, he had set up certain judicial tribunals at Amritsar and Peshawar.

Europeanization of the army has been described. Ranjit Singh came round to the view that infantry could also become a formidable body of troops. Accordingly the Maharaja carried out a number of reforms by which the infantry became, by the year 1834, the strongest and most efficient of all arms of Ranjit Singh. Most of those reforms were carried out under the instructions of General Ventura. Troops began to be subjected to regular drill and discipline. Regular hours were fixed for drill. French words of command were introduced.

Sikh soldiers knew very little of regular artillery before Ranjit Singh. He organized a regular artillery department with the help of European officers, Mr. Court and Gardner. Workshops were set up at Amritsar to cast heavy guns. He fixed a monthly salary for his soldiers. An infantry soldier was paid seven rupees a month while a cavalier got Rs. Twenty-five, out of which he had to provide himself with a horse and its equipment and arms. According to Steinback the pay of the

soldiers of Lahore army was higher than the pay of sepoys of the British army.

All this applied to Fauj-i-Aam or regular army. Besides this, there was the irregular army comprising of Misldar Swars and Jagirdari contingents. Misldar Swars were those horsemen who after the overthrow of their Misl chiefs had joined the service of the Maharaja. Jagirdari contingents were furnished by those noblemen who held jagirs from Ranjit Singh. The Maharaja used to inspect the Jagirdari contingents at the time of the Dusehra festivals.

In addition there were two to three thousand Akali regulars. They fought with desperation and were employed on the most dangerous campaigns under Akali Phula Singh or Sadhu Singh.

Before his death Ranjit singh had predicated that the British would come to rule the whole of India including the Punjab. In ten years his prophecy *Sab Ial ho Jaiga* (the red colour of British control would spread to the whole of India) came true.

As desired by maharaja Ranjit singh himself, his son Prince Kharak Singh sat on the throne after his death. In terms of possessing the qualifications of a ruler, he was not a patch on his father. Apart from Dhian Singh was officially the chief minister, Kharak Singh came under the influence of a relation of his, Chet Singh, who really wielded the power behind the throne. This annoyed Kharak Singh's son Nau Nihal Singh and Dogra Dhian Singh. Nau Nihal Singh returned to Lahore from Peshawar in August 1839. On the 9th of October, the prince and the Dogra brothers together, killed Chet Singh in the presence of Kharak Singh.

Nau Nihal Singh became the Maharaja in every respect except in name. He was an energetic prince and put new life into the administration and the army. Gulab Singh Dogra again became restless and incited the neighbouring hill chiefs to rebel. They were, however, brought under effective control and punished.

On November 5, 1840 Kharak Singh died. When Nau Nihal Singh was returning after the cremation of his father, the arch of gateway that gave access to the fort gave way over his head. His skull was fractured. A son of Gulab Singh died on the spot and Dhian Singh

Dogra and Diwan Dina Nath received injuries. Some British historians have said that the accident was contrived by Dhain Singh. Since Dhian Singh's own nephew was killed and he himself was also hit, there is no ground for believing the conjecture.

Nau Nihal Singh's death was not announced till Prince Sher Singh had arrived in Lahore. On his arrival, Dhain Singh made it known that Nau Nihal Singh had expired and Sher Singh was the new Maharaja. One of Nau Nihal Singh's queens who was performing Sati on his pyre, pinned the royal Aigrette on his turban and another put the tilak mark on Dhain Singh's forehead indicating that he was the chief minister.

Before Sher Singh could assume full control of affairs, Rani Chand Kaur, widow of Kharak Singh and mother of Nau Nihal Singh staked her claim to the throne with the help of Shandhwala. To counteract Dhian Singh's influence, she called Gulab Singh from Jammu. She was proclaimed the Empress and gained complete control of the palace and the fort. Sher Singh and Dhian Singh both left Lahore.

Chand Kaur could not carry the army with her, which was with Sher Singh. All the regiments stationed outside the fort went over to Sher Singh. He Came to Lahore and took the city and assaulted the fort. On Lahore and an agreement was reached. Chand Kaur was persuaded to give up her claim to the throne and was made to accept big jagirs instead.⁴³

Ranjit Singh has been likened to many historical personages as Sher Shah Suri, Napoleon, Bismarck, Abraham Lincoln, Shivaji and Haider Ali. In fact a person cannot be compared reasonably to another person so long as the circumstances of both were not similar. The circumstances under which Ranjit Singh carved his way to a kingdom were more unfavorable than those faced by most of the above mentioned great men of history. The Indian rulers, as referred to above, had to fight only against the Mughals but Ranjit Singh created a big state despite the opposition and hostile attitude of the Marathas, the British the Afghans and the sikh chiefs of the various Misals of the Punjab. He was great conqueror who got liberated permanently the north-west frontier of the Punjab from the control of Afghanistan.⁴⁴

He gave a very efficient administration to the people and united the scattered and divided portions of the Punjab into a strong and well-welded kingdom. He re-organized his army on the western style and transformed it into an invulnerable force to reckon with. He was statesman par excellence He exhibited a wonderful grasp of the political and military situations confronting him.

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The Successor Of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh & Their Relation With English

Ranjeet Singh, Maharajah of the Punjab, died on the afternoon of the 27th of June, 1839. In the forty years that he ruled, he hammered warring Sikh factions into one and welded people of diverse loyalties into a nation, and he made the nation strong and prosperous. Guru Nanak's mission of bringing the Hindus and Muslims together and Guru Gobind Singh's Endeavour to raise a warlike fraternity had succeeded.

The Punjab was no longer a cockpit for foreign armies contending for the sovereignty of Hindustan, on the contrary, it had become not only the stronger Indian power but also one of the most powerful states in Asia. After many centuries of domination by Pathans and Afghans, the Punjabis had reversed the roles by

extending their kingdom across the Pathan country and becoming arbiters of the destiny of the throne of Kabul. They had overcome Chinese satellites in Tibet and stopped British expansion to the west. No longer did the invader dare to set foot in the Punjab, to trample over the young wheat or plunder the peasantry when the harvest was gathered in Highways had been made safe, once again caravans from central Asia and Hindustan exchanged their wares in the markets of the Punjab. All this had been achieved by the people of the Punjab under the leadership of a man who had risen from their midst.¹

Ranjit Singh was like a massive banyan tree which cast its shadow over the whole of the Punjab, and like the banyan he had sheltered the land beneath him to such an extent that nothing but weeds could thrive in it.

Consequently, when he died there was no one of sufficient stature to step into his shoes and guide the destinies of the state. This applied particularly to the people who were close to Ranjit Singh, members of his family and favorites at court whom he had raised from rustic obscurity to power, from modest circumstances to wealth beyond their imagination.

Ranjit Singh left seven sons. Since they were born of different women, the emotions that determined their attitude towards each other were fratricidal rather than fraternal. The eldest, Kharak Singh, who had been invested as the future maharaja, was the least suited to rule the Punjab.

He was an indolent, easy going debauchee with neither the restless energy that had animated his illustrious father nor the down to earth simplicity that had endeared his predecessor to the masses. Kharak Singh was, however, not unwilling to leave the tedium of administration to more willing hands, especially to a favorite, Chet Singh Bajwa, who was related to him through his wife. Kharak Singh's son, Nao Nihal Singh, was cast in a different mould ambitious, enterprising, and endowed with a pleasant personality.

Ranjit Singh's second son, Sher Singh, was also ambitious and affable. He based his claim on being born of Ranjit Singh's first wedded wife. Kharak Singh refuted the contention and asserted that he (Kharak Singh) was the only legitimate son of his father the others Sher Singh, Tara Singh, Kashmira Singh, Peshaura Singh, Multana Singh, and Dalip Singh were of doubtful paternity.²

The council of ministers and the nobility at the court were as divided as the princes. Two major factions emerged soon after the death of Ranjit Singh. The more influential was that of the Dogras, consisting of the three brothers, Singh's son, Hira Singh who had been a great favorite of the late maharaja. Although the brothers were not of the family managed to be in power at Lahore, while Gulab Singh converted his fief in Jammu into an almost independent Dogra Kingdom.³

Opposed to the Dogras were the Sikh aristocracy, of which three families the Sandhawalias, Attariwalas, and the Majithias were the most prominent. Since the Dogras were Hindus and the Sikh aristocrats were Khalsa, differences between them often assumed a communal aspect of Dogra versus Sikh.

There was among the coterie of self seekers a small number of men who refused to align themselves with either faction and continued to serve the Durbar as faithfully and honestly as circumstances permitted. Outstanding among them were the Fakir brothers, notably the eldest, Azizuddin, who continued to be the adviser on foreign

affairs, and the Kashmiri Brahmin, Dina Nath, who administered the departments of revenue and finance.⁴

In the scramble for power, the decisive factor was the support of the army rival factions tried to win over the soldiers by offering higher wages and gifts and appealing to their sense of patriotism. Seeds of indiscipline had been sown by Maharaja Ranjit Singh himself when he expanded and modernized the army in 1822.

All his conquests had by then been made. Subsequent military campaigns yielded neither profitable territory nor booty to meet the cost of expansion of the army. As a result, payments to the soldiers fell in arrears some units remained unpaid for over two years. After Ranjit's death, when civil administration deteriorated and provincial governors became tardy in remitting revenues, the army was compelled to reimburse itself. Soldiers acquired the habit of looting civilians and selling their services to the highest bidder. They began to disobey their officers. (Officers had independent incomes and little identity of economic interest with their men) officers who tried to assert their authority were manhandled and even murdered. The men resorted to the practice of electing pances to negotiate for terms of

service. They left their units without permission to attend family functions or to help their brethren gather in the harvest. The most unfortunate result of the mutinous attitude of the troopers was to make the foreign officers very nervous. Many left the service of the Durbar most of those who remained sent their money and jewels to banks in India and showed no reluctance in furnishing information to British agents.⁵

With the loosening of central authority, the governors of the outlying provinces began to toy with the idea of becoming independent rulers. Gulab Singh Dogra started expanding his domain at the expense of the Durbar. Muslim tribes, particularly the Yusufzais around Hazara and the Baluchis between the Jhelum and the Indus, became restive. As the Darbar's authority weakened, the British began to mature their plans of stepping in. Their involvement in Afghanistan precluded for some time direct intervention in the Punjab. But as soon as affairs in Afghanistan were settled, they resumed their expansionist policy.⁶

Squabbling among the courtiers began while Ranjit Singh's body lay on the floor of the places bedroom awaiting cremation.

Maharajah Kharak Singh assuaged their fears by assuring them that their jagirs would not be touched. But his relations with his brother Sher Singh continued to be tense for some time. Sher Singh came to Lahore on the last day of the official mourning and a semblance of harmony came to exist between members of the new Maharajah of the Punjab, and Dhain Singh was reinvested Chief minister.⁷

The unanimity in the Durbar did not last many days. Nao Nihal Singh quit his post on the frontier and arrived in Lahore resolved to take over effective control. Dhian the carefully balanced apple-cart. Instead he accepted the prince's right to make major policy decisions and agreed to play the role of chief counsellor. But Chet Singh Bajwa persuaded Maharajah Kharak Singh not to acquiesce in the usurpation of the royal prerogative. The Maharajah made an effort to put his son and the Dogra chief minister in their places. It was however obvious to all concerned that the initiative came from Chet Sigh Bajwa who in shoulder to snipe at the people he did not like. For a short while Bajwa became the power behind the throne. Power turned his head, he became arrogant and then offensive to the Dogras. Dhian Singh and his son were forbidden to return to Jammu.

Nao Nihal Singh left the capital in disgust, and returned to the northwest to prosecute the campaign against the Afghans.

The discord between the ministers became an open scandal, and disloyal elements began to take advantage of the situation. Prince Nao Nihal Singh decided to inter vene.⁸ He arrived in Lahore in August 1839 and let it be known to the maharajah that it was the considered opinion of all the advisers that Bajwa should be dismissed. The maharajah not only ignored the advice but made Bajwa's approval a condition precedent for the grant of new jagirs. The prince sounded out Mr. Clerk who was in Lahore on a business cum condolence mission and, being assured that the British would not create difficulties, quietly assumed the functions of a rule.⁹ In the early hours of October 9, 1839 a band of about twenty men led by Prince Nao Nihal Singh and the three Dogra brothers forced their way into the maharajah's private apartments the Khwabgah or dreamland dragged the hapless Chet Singh Bajwa from his hiding place, and brought him into the presence of Kharak Singh. With his own hands Dhian Singh Dogra tore out Bajwa's bowels shouting at the same time. Take this in the memory of Maharajah Ranjit Singh.

Maharajah Kharak Singh meekly submitted to his audacious son. Nao Nihal Singh occupied the Palace in the fore and became the maharajah of the Punjab in all but name. his attitude to his father changed from obstreperousness to filial propriety. He let all the ceremonial functions remain the prerogative of his father while he attended to administrative matters he had it conveyed to the ministers; governors of provinces; and funerals who had grown accustomed to being left to themselves by the ailing Ranjit Singh and the lackadaisical Kharak Singh; that he meant to govern the Punjab personally and effectively.

They soon began to chafe under the prince' iron rule. But the prince gained the support of the British by overruling his counselors and allowing British troops in Afghanistan to return through the Punjab.¹⁰ Within a couple of months the Punjab felt as if the spirit of Ranjit Singh had been resurrected in the person of his grandson, Nao Nihal Singh.¹¹

Nao Nihal Singh's troubles came from the Dogras. Early in may 1840 , General zorawar Singh Dogra reported from Iskardu that in consequence of the disaffection of the people with their ruler, Ahmed

Shah, he had intervened and put Ahmed Shah's son, Mohammed Shah, on the throne and was himself firmly established at Iskardu. Nao Nihal Singh, while approving of the acquisition of territory, did not want the Dogras to become king-makers in Little Tibet, and he issued orders for the reinstatement of Ahmed Shah, on condition that he send tribute to Lahore. Zorawar Singh turned to his immediate overlord, Gulab Singh Dogra, and the two devised ways of circumventing the prince's orders without openly flouting them.

The prince realised that the Dogras had become inconveniently powerful. A considerable part of their wealth came from the exploitation of the salt mines, over which they exercised a monopoly. The prince wanted to terminate the monopoly so that the people could acquire salt more cheaply. Before he could take any steps in this direction however, Gulab Singh Dogra incited his neighbour, the raja of Mandi, to revolt against the Durbar. Nao Nihal Singh ordered two officers known to be hostile bring Mandi to obedience. This was accomplished, and Durbar Troops brought the mandi raja as prisoner to Amritsar. Ventura established a chain of police posts in the hills. Under instructions from Nao Nihal Singh he abolished arbitrary taxes

levied by the petty rajas and promon among the poorer sections of the hill people. Ventura's campaign subdued the hillmen for a little while.¹²

During the summer of 1840 the cannons of the fort of Lahore were kept busy firing salvos in honor of victories gained by Punjabi armies over the Dogra supported hill people. Relations with British were friendly the Afghans did not matter very much. The countryside was peaceful. The people felt that the old days of glory had returned. But the summer's victories were like a lambent flame flickering to its death.

The rot began at the top and spread to the entire body politic. Maharaja Kharak Singh, who had lapsed into utter idleness, began to drink more excessively and to consume large quantities of opium till he was reduced to a he succumbed to an attack of dysentery and high fever. At his cremation two of his wives mounted the pyre to commit sati. They made Nao Nihal Singh and Dhian Singh Dogra pur their hands on the dead maharaja's chest and swear by all that they held most sacred to serve the state loyally and faithfully.¹³

Fate had ordained otherwise. Nao Nihal Singh consigned the body of Maharaja Kharak Singh and his consorts to the flames, dismissed the mourners, and made his way back to the palace. As he was passing under the gateway which gave access to the fort, the arch gave way, and slabs of stone and masonry crashed down on his head. A son of Gulab Singh Dogra was killed on the spot. Several others, including Dhian Singh Dogra and Dean Dina Nath, received injuries. Nao Nihal Singh's skull was fractured.

Dhian Singh Dogra had the unconscious Nao Nihal Singh removed to the Palace, and though there was little doubt that life was fast ebbing out, he had it bruited about that the prince was well on the way to recovery. When Nao Nihal Singh died a few hours later, the chief minister ordered that the news of the death be withheld till the matter of the succession had been settled. After consulting the senior members of the council, he invited Prince Sher Singh to come to Lahore immediately.

There is little doubt that Sher Singh was the fittest person to succeed to the throne he was popular with the army, courteous, and

amiable and the English whose opinions were of consequence in the Durbar's affair, were known to approve of him.¹⁴

Dhian Singh Dogra's plans were upset by his rivals in the council, who decided to support Kharak Singh's widow, Chand Kaur, and sent word to her and her Sandhawalia kinsmen to come to Lahore at once.¹⁵

Dhian Singh Dogra tried frantically to get some sort of agreement from Chand Kaur before the intriguers brew came to a boil. He temporarily succeeded in persuading her to accept the honorific of a queen, with Sher singh as the afsar kalan. He summoned the British agent, and in the presence of all the courtiers asked him to convey to his government that the arrangement had been adopted by the whole Khalsa in concord and unanimity. After few hours of meeting Prince Sher Singh arrived in Lahore. The death of Nao Nihal Singh was made known, and the succession of Sher Singh was proclaimed.

In the afternoon Nao Nihal Singh's body was taken to the spot where his father's ashes still smouldered. Two of the princes's consorts mounted the pyre with him. One pinned the royal aigrette on

Sher Singh's turban, the other daubed Dhian Singh Dogra's forehead with saffron to signify that he was chief minister. Before they perished, the satis made the prince and the minister swear loyalty to the state.¹⁶

It did not take Chand Kaur very long to recover from the shock of the deaths of her husband and son. She exploited the sympathy that the tragedy had generated and staked her claim to the crown. She sent for Gulab Singh Dogra from Jammu to counteract his brother, Dhian Singh's, influence. Dhian singh suggested many compromises. She could marry Sher Singh or, being childless, adopt Sher Singh's son, Pratap Singh. Chand Kaur spurned the offer of marriage.

How could she marry man whom she described as sheroo coba the bastard son of a dyer. She parried the suggestion of adopting Pratap by offering instead to adopt Dhian Singh Dogra's son, Hira Singh. She also had it noised about that one of Nao Nhal Singh's windows was pregnant. Dhian Singh did his best to bring her to reason. He placed his turban at her feet and implored her to accept the title of queen dowager with kaur tore up the proposal. In a stormy scene in the Darbar Dhian Singh warned Chand Kaur of the danger of

leading an ear to mischief mongers. He told her that the government of the Punjab did not depend either on her or on Sher Singh or any of the claimants I the royal family, because it was the government of the entire Khalsa Gloom spread over the country, soothsayers predicated the doom of the Khalsa government in the year 1840.¹⁷

A few days later, two Dandhawlia Sardars, Ajit Singh and Attar Singh, arrived in Lahore and took over control. On December2, 1840, Chand Kaur was proclaimed maharani of the Punjab with the title malika mukaddas revered empress. The next day Sher Singh left Lahore for his estate in Batala. A month later Dhian Singh Dogra too was compelled to quit the capital. Chand Kaur and the Sandhwalias gained complete control of the administration.¹⁸

The dice were heavily loaded against Chand Kaur. The Punjabis were unable to reconcile themselves to being ruled by a woman who could not leave the veiled seclusion of the zenana. And Chand Kaur proved to be singularly inept in the art of diplomacy she was vain, ill-tempered, and given to using language that became a bazaar woman more than a maharani.

The chief problem of the Mai-mother, a Chand Kaur came to be known among the people was the loyalty of the army. Sher Singh was popular with the troops and the European officers. He offered the troops an increase in wages. Desertions to the prince's camp began on a large scale. Most of the crack regiments went over to him, and the mai's men were refused access to the magazine. Within a fortnight of her assumption of power, the Mai had to have two battalions posted inside the fort to protect her person. The state of uncertainty encouraged lawless elements in the countryside. The English started movements of troops towards the Sutlej.¹⁹

Sher Singh decided to seize power from the feeble hands of the widow and save the Punjab from disintegration. He sent an envoy to Mr. Clerk at Ludhiana to obtain English reactions to his bid for the throne. The British were bogged down in Afghanistan and were in dire need of help. In the anglophile Sher Singh they saw a potential ally and gave him assurance of support.

Sher Singh arrived at Lahore at the head of an army composed of deserters who had flocked to his colours most of the Durbar's European officers were with him.

The Mai did not lose heart. She appointed Gulab Singh Dogra as the commander in chief and charged him with the task of defending the city. She cleared four months of arrears in the soldier's wages and lavished presents of gold bangles, necklaces, jewels, and shawls on the officers. She issued orders to the city's bankers forbidding them to lend money to Sher Singh.

These measures had the reverse effect. The troops sensed her nervousness and felt that she was again trying to win a lost cause by bribery. Sher Singh had little money, but he was able to infuse confidence that his promise of a permanent increase of Rs. 1/- per month in the wages of the troops as well as reward those who joined them. The regiments stationed outside the city walls went over in a body. Sher Singh had 26000 infantry, 8000 horses, and 45 guns. The Mai was left with only 5000 men, a few guns, and a limited quantity of gunpowder.²⁰

Sher Singh forced his way into the city. He made a belated proclamation assuring safety of life and property to the citizens and offered pardon to those who would come over to him. The leading

courtiers made their submission and forwarded a joint appeal to the Mai and Gulab Singh Dogra to lay down arms.²¹

The Mai, Supported by Gulab Singh Dogra, refused to surrender, and the battle was joined. For two days Sher Singh's artillery shelled the fort, and the guns of the fort poured death and destruction on the bazaars lying beneath the ramparts. On the evening of January 17, 1841, Dhian Singh Dogra arrived and arranged a cease fire.

The Mai was persuaded to accept a handsome jagir and relinquish her pretensions to the throne. Sher Singh undertook to show her the respect due to a brother's widow and to pardon the men who had sided with her, Her short reign of a month and a half was over. At midnight Gulab Singh and his Dogras evacuated the fort taking with them all the Durbar's hoard of gold and jewels kept at Lahore. Ajit Singh Sandhawalia fled to seek help from the British agent at Ludhiana. On Mr. Clerk's refusal to receive him, he proceeded to Calcutta to see the governor general. Attar Singh Sandhawalia followed him into British territory.

Sher Singh occupied the fort and was invested with the title of the maharaja of the Punjab. Dhian Singh Dogra was proclaimed chief minister.

Sher Singh's rule began badly. He was unable to redeem his promise to the troops, who continued looting the bazaars. Soldiers went berserk, murdering regimental accountants and officers whom they suspected of having embezzled their wages or having dealings with the English. Sher Singh and Dhian Singh Dogra invited two men each heard their grievance. They agreed to dismiss corrupt accountants but refused to agree to the pances demand to transfer officers they did not like the meeting became stormy. The weak willed Sher Singh threw up his hands with the remark, Kaca Pakka sambhalo which gave the pances to understand that they were free to settle things for themselves.²²

Maharaja Sher Singh belied the hopes of his many admirers. With the army in open mutiny, the best he could do was to plead with the men to be reasonable and give them whatever money he had in the first six months of his rule he parted with nearly 95 lacs of rupees to the soldiers. Even this did not appease the men who threatened to

depose him instead of facing them resolutely, sher singh sought escape in the cup, the company of courtesans and the Mai what the Punjab had prayed for was a dictator. What it got was a handsome and. Well meaning dandy who knew more about French wines and perfumes than he did about statecraft.²³

The attitude of the British government towards sher singh's succession was somewhat ambivalent. The governor general him as ruler of the Punjab but at the same time gave asylum to Ajit singh sandhawlia and did nothing to prevent him from raising troops to invade the Punjab.²⁴

Sordid tales of the goings on in the palace destroyed whatever respect the people retained for the Durbar. The British added to its discomfiture by refusing to accord it the respect due to a sovereign state. The most flagrant case was the abuse of hospitality by Major Broadfoot. Broadfoot was permitted to escort the seraglios of Shah Zaman and Shah Suhuja across the Punjab of Afghanistan and was provided with an escort of Mussalman troops. The major's attitude was aggressive from the very start, and on more than one occasion he ordered his men to open fire on the Punjabis who happened to come

near his party. The Durbar suffered this kind of behavior and worse. When Broadfoot had crossed the Indus, he called on the Pathan tribesmen to revolt against the Durbar.²⁵

The Broadfoot episode, following many cases of betrayal of national interest by courtiers, noblemen, and officers, forced the men of the Punjab army to make their own voice heard in matters of state. The only institution with which they were familiar was the pancayat the council of elders which regulated the affairs of the villages from which they came. This institution had been introduced in the army, and each regiment had begun to elect its own pances, whose duty was to deliberate on the orders of the commanding officer and then to make their recommendations to the men. In the army, the pancayats did not develop into a proper administrative system, and much detain their influence the pances often pressed for concessions and increases in wages which were unreasonable. Some senior pances became powerful enough to be able to auction posts of officers, they appointed deputies to convey their decisions to the troops and ensure their acceptance. The results were disastrous. The army lost its discipline as well as direction by officers who had greater experience in military affairs.²⁶

While the Durbar at Lahore was preoccupied with pacifying its mutinous soldiery and helping the British out of their predicament in Afghanistan, the Dogras began the second phase of the conquest of Tibet.

There were economic reasons for extending the frontiers of Jammu and the valley of the Jhelum beyond the Himalayas. Since the British had extended their frontiers to the Sutlej. Tibetan caravans which had passed through Kashmir began instead to go through Bushair. The Kashmiri shawl makers, who obtained much of their raw wool from Ladakh and Lhasa, suffered most. There was danger of the Kashmir wool industry dying out. Besides this, Rohtak district of the province of Garo was reputed to be rich in gold, borax, sulphur, and rock salt, and had a thriving market which supplied many parts of and had a thriving market which supplied many parts of Central Asia. There were complementary political reasons for the expansion.²⁷ By striking out north and then eastwards, the Punjab could establish a common frontier with the only other independent state of India, Nepal and thus guard itself against the possibility of British encirclement.

Zorawar Singh Dogra had taken Ladakh in 1834 and then driven the wedge a little farther by capturing Iskardu, on the junction of two tributaries of the Indus. Another approach route to these mountainous regions had been opened up by the occupation of Mandi and Kulu. The Dogra general decided to press these points further, one Northward and the other eastwards towards the Nepalese frontier.²⁸

It was not difficult to find an excuse for aggression. In April 1841, Zorawar Singh demanded Garo's adhesion to the Punjab on the grounds that Garo was dependency of Iskardu and Iskardu was now a province of the Punjab. In view of the changed circumstances he also desired that Lhasa should pay tribute to Lahore rather than to Peking. British contact with Lhasa. In June 1841 the Dogras captured Garo. Zorawar Singh thought it politic to send inward towards Tuklakote. A Tibetan force sent to oppose them was annihilated, and a few days later the Durbar's flag was hoisted at Tuklakote. The Dogras had pierced the heart of Tibet to its very core. By the time they were able to consolidate their new conquests, the campaigning season in the mountains was over.

This brilliant feat of arms alarmed the British, and their agent demanded that the Durbar give up its new conquests. While the verbal warfare was going on between Ludhiana and Lahore, the Chinese mustered their armies. With the first fall of snow they encircled the Dogra advanced posts, cut off their supply lines, and waited patiently for the elements to do the rest.²⁹

The Dogras were reduced to desperate straits. They were marooned at a height of 12000 feet in the midst of a vast sea of drifting snow and ice. They ran out of food and fuel, and soldiers began to die of frost bite. Zorawar Singh offered to withdraw, but the Chinese were unwilling to let a trapped bird slip out of their grasp. You seized Ladakh and we remained silent. You became bold in consequence and took possession of Gartok and Tuklakote. If you desire peace, give up Ladakh and go back to your own country was the Chinese reply.

The Dogras were compelled to fight their way out. Hunger and cold had sapped their vitality, and they had to contend with an enemy who not only outnumbered them by ten to one but was also equipped for winter warfare. On December 12 1841, fell the gallant Zorawar

Singh. The rest of the band laid down arms and were butchered in cold blood. Tuklakote was abandoned. Before the spring thaw, the Chinese reoccupied their Tibetan possessions and reinstated their satellites at Iskardu and Ladakh. Only at Leh did the Punjab flag still flutter defiantly in the Tibetan breeze.³⁰

Gulab Singh Dogra rushed reinforcements to Ladakh. By the spring of 1842 Gogra troops reached Leh and pushed forward to recapture Ladakh. The advance continued in the form of a pincer movement towards Garo. One column reached the boundary of the district in August, 1842 but was dissuaded from proceeding further by a British officer, Lieutenant Cunningham, who happened to be there. The other column decimated a Chinese force sent against it from Lhasa.

On October 17, 1842, the durbar agent and Gulab Singh's personal representative signed a treaty with the representatives of the Chinese emperor at Lhasa. It was agreed that the boundaries of Ladakh and Lhasa would be considered inviolable by both parties and that the trade, particularly of tea and pasmina woof, would as in the past pass through Ladakh.³¹

The British were prevented from taking active steps to check the Dogra incursion into Tibet by a sudden turn of events in Afghanistan. In the autumn of 1841 the afghans rose and destroyed the British army of occupation. Among those who were murdered was Sir Alexander Burnes the chief architect of British expansionism in Sindh, the Punjab, and Afghanistan. The attempt to reinstate Shah Shuja on the throne of Kabul had been a joint Punjabi British venture, and consequently the disaster which over whelmed British arms at Kabul could not be overlooked by the Durbar. General Avitabile was ordered to go to the relief of the British.

The Punjabis recaptured Ali Masjid but were unable to hold it as the winter set in. As soon as the passes were cleared of snow they resumed their offensive and with a British contingent, once again occupied Ali Masjid in the spring of 1842. The Durbar arranged for the supply of grain, cattle, and other provisions to British troops and dispatched its own force, which was larger than the British, to Afghanistan.

The Punjabis relieved Jalalabad and helped to re-establish British power in Afghanistan. Fortunately for the British, Shah Shuja

died. They decided to scrap the Tripartite Treaty and make terms with Dost Mohammed. The Amir was released from detention to be sent back of Kabul.

The British behavior in the Afghan campaign soured Sher Singh. He saw how they had used the Punjab as a stepping stone to reach Afghanistan, and having done so, scrapped the treaty without considering the Durbar's in British committed unprovoked aggression against Sindh. Without even waiting for a excuse, Sir Charles Napier occupied the province in March 1843. What guarantee was there that the British would not act in the same way towards the Punjab.³²

Relations between the Durbar and the British cooled visibly. Sher Singh continued to keep up appearances of friendship but stopped playing second fiddle to the British. He gave Dost Mohammed, who had crossed swords with the Punjabis in innumerable battles, a great reception when he passed through Lahore on his way to Kabul. The durbar signed a separate treaty recognizing him as the Amir of Afghanistan.³³

The British sensed that they had through their own maladroitness lost the confidence of Sher Singh. They also felt that as long as Dhian Singh Dogra remained the chief minister there was little chance of the Durbar changing its attitude towards them. Persisting in their pretensions of friendship, they asked Sher Singh to allow the Sandhawalia Sardars, Known to be inimical towards Dhian Singh Dogra, to return to the Punjab and have their estates restored to them.

The Maharaja, who had begun to chafe under Dhian Singh's domination accepted the British suggestion. In November 1842 Ajit Singh Sandhawalia arrived at Lahore and was received with open arms by the simple minded Sher Singh. Other members of the family were also reinstated in their possessions. As was perhaps anticipated, the Sandhawalias became the pro British, anti Dogra party in the Darbar.³⁴

Dhian Singh Dogra proved to be too strongly entrenched to be removed at the whims of princes of counters. The Shandhawalias were compelled to resort to violence and in the process, to make a clean sweep of the set up at Lahore. Whether they acted on their own initiative or on the assurance of support from the British will never be

known for in the holocaust that followed all the evidence was drowned in blood.

On September 15, 1843 the first of the month of Asuj by the Hindu calendar, it arranged that Sher Singh would take the salute at a march past and inspect the troops of Ajit Singh Sandhawalia. Sher Singh took his elder son, Pratap Singh, with him and left the child to amuse himself in a nearby garden.

After the march past, the Sandhawalia came up to the platform where the maharajah was seated to present a double barreled gun of English manufacture which he had brought with him from Calcutta. As the maharajah stretched put his hands to receive the weapon, Ajit Singh pressed the trigger. *Eh Ki Dagha* what treachery is this cried the unfortunate maharajah before he collapsed. The Sandhawalias men fell upon sher singh's escort, Ajit Singh hacked off the maharaja's head and mounted it on his spear. At the same time Ajit's uncle seized Pratap Singh and severed the boy's neck. He too impaled his victim's head to the city flaunting their trophies. For reasons still unknown, they were admitted into the fort. They sent invitations to the Dogras- Dhian Singh, Hira Singh, and Suchet Singh to join them. Dhian Singh

fell into the trap and came to the fort with a very small escort. He was killed and his bodyguard of 25 was hacked to pieces. When Suchet Singh and Hira Singh, who were encamped a couple of miles outside the city, received news of Dhian Singh's murder, they immediately sought refuge in the cantonment and appealed to the Khalsa army to avenge the murders.³⁵

The Sandhawalias occupied the fort and the palace in the belief that they would now rule the Punjab. They had reckoned without the people.

News of the dastardly crimes sent a wave of horror through Lahore. The army pances resolved to take the city under their protection and to punish the malefactors, and they chose as their leader Hira Singh, the son of Dhian Singh Dogra. The fort was surrounded. All through the night artillery blasted the ramparts. Next morning Nihangs stormed in through the breaches and captured the citadel. The assassins and 600 of their troops were put to the sword. But attar Singh Sandhawalia remained. He received the news of the capture of Lahore by the army and fled across the Sutlej, where he was given asylum by the British.

Ranjit Singh's youngest son, Dalip singh, was proclaimed Maharajah with Hira Singh Dogra as his chief minister. Real power, however, had passed from the palace to the cantonment.³⁶

The blood bath left the Durbar in a state of exhaustion without lancing it of its malignant factionalism. There was a realignment of courtiers behind the claimants to the throne and the post of chief minister. Maharajah Dalip Singh had two stepbrothers, Peshaura Singh and Kashmira Singh, both older than he and anxious to press their claims to the throne, both had private armies of their own. And although Hira Singh Dogra had been named as the chief vazir, his appointment was not unquestioned. Since the maharajah was only seven years old, his mother, the youthful and comely Jindan, assumed the role of queen mother and introduced her brother, Jawahar Singh, into the council as a sort of guardian cum adviser. Besides these two Sucher Singh Dogra felt that he had a stronger claim to be chief vazir than his nephew, Hira Singh. Gulab singh Dogra supported Suchet Singh.

The relations between the Dogras were further acerbated by the presence of a Brahmin priest, Jalla, who had been companion tutor to

Hira Singh Dogra since the latter's childhood. Jalla was an extremely arrogant man of peevish disposition and soon came to be disliked by everyone. Gulab Singh Dogra and Suchet Singh loathed him more than anyone else.³⁷

Palace intrigues consumed the energies of the court and the council, leaving them little time to attend to the day-to-day business of administration. The British felt that they might be called upon to intervene to restore order and began to move troops up to the Sutlej. These troop movements worsened the situation in the Punjab. Many Sardars opened negotiations with the British to have their Jagirs confirmed.

The danger of external aggression and internal dissension made the army the most powerful element in the state.³⁸ The legend of Khalsa invincibility was revived. A man who came to the fore now was one Bhai Bir Singh, a retired soldier turned ascetic who had set up his own gurdwara at village Naurangabad on the Sutlej. In times of national crisis, Sikh soldiers and peasantry began to turn to Bhai Bir Singh for guidance. Attending the bhai was a volunteer army of 1200

musket men and 3000 horsemen. Over 1500 pilgrims were fed in his kitchen every day.³⁹

Hira Singh Dogra tackled the problems facing him with great energy. He dismissed European officers known to be intriguing with the British and sent spies to ascertain details of the military preparations which were being made across the Sutlej. In open court he asked the British vakil pleader to explain why his government was fortifying Ferozepur and why it had given asylum to Attar Singh Sandhawalia, who was known to have been associated with the murders of the previous maharajah and the chief minister and who was inimical to the present regime.

The vakil protested the goodwill of the British and said he would convey the Durbars fears to his government. Hira Singh was not satisfied with the explanation and ordered the garrisoning of Kasur and the strengthening of the defenses of Phillaur.

Movements of troops on either side of the frontier spread uneasiness among the people. The rich began to send their money

and jewellery to British India, and many families of noblemen fled the Punjab on the pretext of making pilgrimages.⁴⁰

Princes Peshaura Singh and Kashmira Singh took advantage of the state of unrest and proclaimed their right to the throne. Hira Singh asked his uncle Gulab Singh Dogra, to proceed against the recalcitrant princes at Sialkot. Gulab Singh undertook the expedition with alacrity.

The Princes put up stout resistance. After they were ejected from Sialkot, they toured through Majha and then joined Bhai Bir Singh at Naurangabad. They whipped up anti Dogra feeling in the army by pointing out that Hira Singh Dogra had virtually usurped the throne. The pances things, that Dalip Singh be formally installed as maharajah Peshaura Singh and Kashmira Singh have their estates restored to them and Dogra contingents that had been brought to Lahore be ordered to return to the hills. Hira Singh Dogra accepted the demands. Dalip Singh was seated on the throne and his uncle Jawahar Singh , who was under detention, was released, Kashmira Singh and Peshaura Singh were received at Lahore and their pensions were guaranteed.⁴¹

The next to challenge Hira Singh's stewardship was his uncle, Suchet Singh Dogra, who stood high in the favour of Rani Jindan. Suchet Singh arrived at Lahore and demanded the dismissal of both Hira Singh and Pandit Jalla.⁴² The army pancayat decided to remain loyal to the chief minister. Suchet Singh fled from Lahore. A column sent in pursuit overtook him and slew him and his escort.⁴³

Hira Singh Dogra was not destined to rule in peace. He had hardly finished with his uncle when another danger menaced his position. Attar Singh Sandhawalia, whose hostile activities in British India had been the subject of many protests, crossed the Satlej into Durbar territory and joined Bahi Bir Singh at Naurangabad. Princes Kashmira Singha and Peshaura Singh also left their estates for naurangabad Bahi Bir Singh's camp became the centre of the Sikh revolt against Dogra dominance over the Panjab.⁴⁴

Attar Singh was a formidable foe. He was a kinsman of Ranjit Singh and had served him with distinction. He was considered one of the bravest generals and, in the last few years of Ranjit Singh's life, had become the most powerful of all the Sikh sardars. The British

supported him, and even the sons of the late maharajah were willing to acknowledge his claims.⁴⁵

Hira Singh Dogra harangued the soldiers, reminding them that the Sandhawalia had been responsible for the murders of Maharajah Sher Singh, Prince Pratap Singh, and his father Dhain Singh Dogra that the Sandhawalia had been with the English for the last six months and had promised to give the British six annas out of each rupee collected in revenue if his venture succeeded that Suchet Singh Dogra's widow had financed the revolt with the money her husband had invested in British India and that Bhai Bir Singh and the princes had unwittingly become tools in the hands of traitors. The army pances agreed to side with Hira Singh Dogra and the Durbar troops marched out of Naurangabad.⁴⁶

Bhai Bir Singh tried to bring about a settlement. Whilst the negotiations were going on the impetuous Sandhawalia lost patience and killed one of the Durbar's emissaries. Durbar artillery blasted the Bhai's camp, killing several hundred men including Attar Singh, Prince Kashmira Singh, and Bhai Bir Singh.⁴⁷

The troops though victorious, were filled with remorse. They had soiled their hands with the blood of Maharajah Ranjit Singh's family and of a man looked upon as a guru. They turned their wrath against the Dogras. Hira Singh Dogra assuaged their feelings by making offerings in the memory of Bahi Bir Singh and announcing that he might accept conversion of Sikhism. What really saved Hira Singh Dogra was a fresh wave of rumours that the British were ready to invade the Punjab and a small scale rebellion in the state.⁴⁸

In July 1844 Lord Hardings, a soldier of great repute replaced Lord Ellenborough as governor general. This appointment caused nervousness in Durbar Circles. Consequently, when in October the commander in chief of the East India company's forces in India came up to inspect troops at Ludhiana and Ferozepur, the Punjab army was alerted against a possible invasion, twenty four hour watch kept on fords and ferries. The tension lasted several week.⁴⁹

The final crisis in Hira Singh Dogra's short career was precipitated by Jalla. The Brahmin priest no puritan himself, cast scandalous aspersions on Rani Jindan's character. The Rani and her brother Jawahar Singh, appealed to the army pances, who acclaimed

Jindan and her son, and swore to drive Hira Singh Dogra and jalla out of the Punjab.

Hira Singh Dogra turned to his uncle for help. Gulab singh hurried down from jammu with 7000 dogras. The news of the descent of the hillmen incensed the Khalsa soldiers, who decided to arrest the chief minister and his priest. Hira Singh and Jalla took an escort of Dogras and fled the capital.⁵⁰

Khalsa troops caught up with the fleeing Dogra and his Brahmin mentor. A running fight ensued in which over 1000 dogras were killed. Hira Singh and Jalla were slain and their heads were impaled on spears and paraded through the streets of Lahore.⁵¹

Hira Singh Dogra had been a man of uncommon talent and courage. If circumstances had been different he might well have become the first Dogra Sikh maharajah of the Punjab. But the upstart and arrogant Jalla led to his downfall Jalla's memory is execrated in the doggerel.

Uper Allah

Talley jalla

Jalley de sir tey Khalla

There is God above

All Jalla below

And may He smack jalla on the head with a shoe.

For some time after the murders of Hira Singh Dogra and Jalla there was no one to conduct the affairs of the Durbar Gradually Maharni Jindan took the functions of the court in her hands. She was assisted by her brother Jawahar Singh, Raja Lal singh, and her maidservant, mangla, who because the maharani was in purdah, acted as an intermediary for her mistress. Jindan's first task was to win over the army. In this she had to contend with Prince Peshaura Singh.⁵²

Jindan completely outbid Peshaura Singh and for some time was assured of military support for her son, Maharajah Dalip Singh.

Gulab Singh Dogra utilized the dissension at Lahore to set himself up as an independent ruler in Jammu. He opened negotiations with the Barakzai Afghans and the British he began to strengthen his

forts and to inflame the hill people against the Sikhs. The mountaineers are united against the Seikhs they regards the war as one of religion, he is reported to have said.⁵³

In February 1845 Durbar troops which had been posted along the Sutlej to meet a possible British invasion were directed to Jammu. Gulab Singh Dogra submitted. He handed over 4 lac rupees as tribute, feted the Khalsa army, and sent it back on th road to Lahore loaded with gifts. The Khalsa had not gone very far from Jammu when they were ambushed by the Dogras and relieved of all the tribute. They returned to Jammu and inflicted several defeats on the Dogras. Gulab Singh again capitulated. He came to the Sikh camp. Placed his swords and shield on the ground and stood with his hands joined as a suppliant, and protested his loyalty. The credulous pances were again brought round by gold and words of flattery. A treaty of peace was drawn up by which Gulab Singh undertook to pay 55 lac rupees, of which five had to be paid immediately, and to accompany the army to Lahore.⁵⁴

The dogra displayed great presence of mind and a Machiavellian adroitness in extricating himself from a nasty situation.

He showed calculated indifference to the summons to appear before the court, stating that he was the servant of the Khalsa army and not of the Durbar and that he would only, answer to the pances. (He had announced earlier that the monthly wages of infantry men should be increased from 12 to 15 rupees per mensem). He joined the faction of Lal Singh and became his brother in arms by exchanging swords with him. He was placed under house arrest, but he bought his way out in a few days. He was fined 68 Lacs. He let it be known that the Chinese had invaded his northern provinces and gained permission to return to Jammu. As soon as he was back in his mountain fastness, he reopened negotiations with the British and offered them his services in the event of war against the Sikhs.⁵⁵

While the Durbar troops were engaged in Jammu, Prince Peshaura Singh returned to the Punjab and set up a rival court at Sialkot. This was a signal for lawless elements to rise. Gangs of Nihangs roamed about the Majha country and threatened to loot Amritsar and Lahore. Rani Jindan tried to win over the families of powerful chieftains to her son's side against the pretensions of Peshaura Singh and to help restore law and order in the state.

She broke off Dalip Singh's engagement with the comparatively poor nakkais and betrothed him to the daughter of Gattar Singh Attariwala. This did not deter Peshaura Singh. He captured the fort of Attock, proclaimed himself maharajah, and approached the Afghans for help. Chattar Singh Attariwalal proceeded to Attock.

Peshaura Singh's attempts to secure help from the Afghans and rouse the populace in his favour were not successful. He accepted the assurance of personal safety from Chattar Singh Attariwala and agreed to accompany him to the capital. Twenty miles from Attock, the prince was seized, brought back to the fort, and murdered. The pances discovered that the army had once again been used by one Durbar faction against another. They felt that the murder of Peshaura Singh had been master minded by Rani Jindan's brother, Jawahar Singh, and ordered him to appear before the army pancayat.⁵⁶

On the evening of Spetember 21, 1845 the terrified Jawahar Singh clutched the infant Dalip to his bosom and rode out on his elephant to answer the summons of the pancayat,. Rani Jindan and her maid servant Mangla followed with their escort. At the cantonment, Jawahar Singh refused to alight from his elephant. The guards

plucked the maharajah from his lap and speared Jawahar Singh where he sat in the howdah. Next morning the minister's corpse was cremated. His four wives, who committed sati, died cursing the Khalsa and prophesying that the wives of Sikh soldiers would soon be widows and the Punjab laid desolate. Jindan returned to the palace screaming vengeance against the army and threatening to immolate herself and her son.

The army pancayat took over the affairs of state and became the sovereign of the Punjab. It selected Dewan Dina Nath to act as its mouthpiece and issued instructions that no letter was to be issued to the English till the pances had deliberated on its contents. The pancayat acted in the name of the Khalsa. Its orders were issued under the seal Akal Sahai the Lord in our helper.

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First Anglo Sikh War & Conspiracy Of English

When did the British decide that the state of anarchy in the Punjab had come to such a pass that the security of their possessions required the strengthening of the Sutlej frontier and, if necessary, crossing the river? And when did the Sikhs come to the conclusion that the British had resolved to take the Punjab as they had taken the rest of India and were moving their troops with hostile intent.¹

It is not possible to answer these questions with any precision. There were Englishmen who believed that it was the destiny of their race to rule and civilize the natives sections of the British press publicised these views and wrote of extending the Pax Britannica to the furthest geographical borders of the sub-continent and even beyond. The Durbar was not ignorant of these views, Reports published in Calcutta newspapers, gists of speeches delivered

transmitted to Lahore.² After the death of Ranjit Singh, the Punjab campaign had become a common topic of discussion in British circles. By the time Sher Singh became maharajah, these discussions had crystallised into plans of conquest.³ With the arrival in July 1844 of Lord Hardinge and experienced soldier, the plans were translated into blueprints, men and munitions were moved up to the Punjab frontier to be at their allotted places in time for the campaigning season, which began in the autumn. In September 1844, Broadfoot, who had earned notoriety for his anti Punjabi behavior and was known to be rather too prone to war, was chosen to replace Colonel Richmond as the agent at Ludhiana.⁴

The army mustered along the Sutlej was, however, not strong enough to invade the Punjab, nor was there any semblance of an excuse to do so. The invasion project was postponed, but not abandoned. The movement of troops towards the frontier was maintained.⁵ A fleet of sixty flat-bottomed boats, designed to link up into a pontoon bridge and provide passage to 6000 infantry at one trip, was assembled on the eastern banks of the Sutlej by the summer of 1845 Broadfoot was exercising these boats without concealment or mystery.⁶

By the autumn of 1845, the invasion force the largest ever assembled by the British in India was poised on the Punjab frontier. It had been increased from 17000 men and 66 guns.⁷ In addition to Ludhiana (which had been the only military outpost till 1809), cantonments had been built at Ambala, Ferozepur, and in the Simla hills overlooking the Sutlej. In the first week of December 1845. Lord Gough personally led units from Meerut and Ambala towards Ferozepur, where General Littler awaited him and where the boats had been assembled to bridge the Sutlej Lord Hardinge decided to join Gough to give the benefit of his experience to his commander in chief.⁸

At Lahore they are quiet, drinking and intriguing politically and amorously, wrote Broad foot in July 1845. A month later he reported in somewhat the same vein. I sometimes feel as if I were a sort of parish constable at the door of a brothel rather than the representative of one government to another.⁹ Even after making allowances for the British agent's gullibility in accepting bazaar gossip as authentic news, one cannot avoid the conclusion that while the British were carefully planning for war aggressive or defensive the Durbar lulled itself into a false sense of security and abandoned itself to the delights of the flesh.

Rani Jindan Raja Lal Singh, the chief minister, and Tej Singh, the commander in chief of the Sikh forces, and many of the chieftains both Sikh and Dogra, were in communication with the British and willing to sell the Punjab provided their lives and jagirs were secured.¹⁰ The courtiers were thoroughly scared of the undisciplined soldiery and sought its destruction. British troop movements gave them an opportunity to divert the attention of the army from their own conduct to the British and so whip up the Khalsa's Anglophobia.¹¹

The Khalsa army was hostile to both the Durbar and the British. The former it blackmailed into granting higher wages (the Punjab trooper drew almost twice as much pay as the company's sepoy) the latter was suspected of buying over the ministers and senior officers in order to facilitate plans of conquest. Although the army was the chief author of the chaos in the state, the pances were able to maintain a certain measure of discipline in the cantonment¹² and to organize the casting of new guns, construction of carriages, laying in stores of gunpowder, muskets and swords, etc.¹³ They were also able to infuse a sense of patriotism in the rank and file, resurrect the mystique of the invincibility of the Khalsa, and fire them with the ambition of driving the feringhee into the sea.¹⁴

The British agent asked for an explanation of the military preparations. The Durbar replied that they were defensive measures to counter the aggressive designs of the British.¹⁵ In addition, the Durbar asked for the return of the treasure of Suchet Singh Dogra estimated at over 17 lac of rupees, the restoration of village Moron¹⁵ in Nabha, arid free passage for the Punjab armed constabulary to the Durbar's possessions across the Sutlej a right that had been acknowledged by the British on paper but more often than not denied in practice.¹⁶

The British Government rejected the Durbar's explanation.

Lord Gough continued to advance. Lord Hardinge joined him on November 26 at karnal, and the two proceeded to march towards Ferozepur, On December 3 the British severed diplomatic relations with the Durbar by handing the Durbar agent his passport. There was little doubt now that the British wanted war. If they were allowed to join their forces at Ferozepur, they would inevitably cross the pontoon bridge and menace Lahore. The Khalsa army decided to forestall this move. One division was ordered to engage General Littler and the other to intercept the army advancing under Gough and Hardinge.

On December 11, 1845 the Punjab army began to cross the Sutlej near Hari ki Pattan¹⁶ to own territory on the side of the river. On December 13 Lord Hardinge declared war. He accused the Sikhs of invading British territories without a shadow of provocation. The Durbar's possessions on the left bank of the Sutlej were confiscated and Cis-Sutlej chiefs were called upon to cooperate in punishing a common enemy.¹⁷

The precise strength of the army sent by the Durbar against the English is not known, but there is no evidence that it was any larger than that of the enemy. There is however, little doubt that both its commanders, Lal Singh¹⁸ and Tej Singh, were in treasonable communication with the English, and in all probability Rani Jindan was aware that Lal Singh¹⁸ had written to the British to consider him and the bibi sahiba as their friends and cut up the burchas for them.¹⁹

The Durbar army was divided into two Tej Singh proceeded towards Ferozepur to reckon with General Littler. Lal Singh entrenched the larger part of his force near village Pheru Shahr and him self marched on to intercept Gough and Hardinge.²⁰ He was surprised to find that the British had advanced as far as Mudki.

Despite the enemy's superiority in men and arms Lal Singh ordered his troops to commence hostilities while he himself retired to Ferozeshah.²¹ The leaderless Punjabis fought a grim hand to hand battle against the more numerous enemy led by the most experienced commanders of Europe. The battle continued with unabated fury till midnight. After the loss of half of their force and fifteen guns, the Punjabis withdrew from the battle field.²²

The field action of Mudki was not of very great military significance except insofar as it gave the British their first experience of the fighting qualities of the Punjabi soldier. British casualties were heavy²³ reinforcements were sent for from Ambala, Meerut, and Delhi. Lord hardinge relinquished his superior position of governor general and agreed to become second in command to his commander in chief. The march to the Sutlej was resumed.²⁴

On the morning December 21 Gough came in sight of the Punjabi entrenchments at Ferozeshahr. By the afternoon. General Littler, who had eluded Tej Singh, was able to join forces with Gough.²⁵ The British commanders ordered an immediate attack. The

Battle commenced late in the afternoon on what happened to be the shortest day of the year.

The British tried to overrun the Punjabis in one massive cavalry, infantry, and artillery onslaught.²⁶ The battle raged with extreme ferocity through the evening till both armies were enveloped in the dark. A shell hit the Punjabi powder magazine and set many tents on fire. The Punjabis turned the misfortune to their advantage by falling on parties of the enemy who had penetrated their entrenchments.²⁷ At midnight the moon rose over the battle field giving the Punjabis another opportunity to liquidate enemy pockets and recover the ground they had lost. The British suffered terrible casualties every single member of the governor general's staff was killed or wounded. That frosty night the fate of India trembled in the balance.²⁸

The sun rose on the plains of Ferozeshahr over a terribly battered British army.²⁹ It had run out of ammunition. And the men had no stomach left for battle. At this point Tej Singh arrived from Feozepur with troops, fresh and eager for combat.³⁰

Tej Singh's guns opened fire. The British artillery had no shot with which to reply. Then, without any reason, Tej Singh's guns also fell silent, and a few minutes later. Tej Singh ordered his troops to retreat. Lord Gough quickly realised that the Sikh commanders had fulfilled their treacherous promise.³¹ He ordered his cavalry to charge the entrenchments at Fezozeshahr. The defenders, who were confidently expecting Tej Singh to give the enemy the coup de grace, were taken by surprise. They fled from their encampment, abandoning their guns, 80000 lbs. Of gun powder, and all their stores.³²

The disaster at Ferozeshahr broke the morale of the few Durbar notables who had remained loyal to the state. Gulab Singh Dogra sent his agent to Ludhiana to negotiate terms for his assistance to the British, his example was followed by many other chieftains. To induce further desertions Hardinge issued a proclamation inviting all natives of Hindustan to quit the service of the Durbar on pain of forfeiting their property and to claim protection from the British Governemnt.³³

Lords Gough decided to wait for reinforcements before crossing the Sutlej and pushing on to Lahore. The Durbar received information that enemy guns and munitions were being moved northwards from

Delhi and Ambala.³⁴ This armament was to be assembled at Ludhiana before being sent downstream to Ferozepur.

Ranjodh Singh majithia and Ajit singh of Ladwa crossed the Sutlej at Phillaur with a force of 8000 men and 70 guns. In rapid marches they liberated the fots of Fatehgarh, Dharamkote Gangarana, and Buddowal and encamped at Baran Hara, seven miles from Ludhiana. The Punjabis stole into Ludhiana cantonment and set many barracks on fire.³⁵

Sir Harry Smith was sent to relieve Ludhiana. He marched northwards from Fezozepur, Keeping a few miles away from the Sutlej. Ranjodh Singh Majithia harried Smith's column and, when Smith tried to make a detour at Buddowal, attacked his rear with great vigour and captured his baggage train and stores.³⁶

A few days later, Sir Harry Smith received the reinforcements he was expecting and turned on the Punjabis. At Aliwal, Smith inflicted a sharp defeat on Ranjodh Singh Majithia and Ajit Singh of Ladwa. Once more the Punjabi men refused to give in. Large numbers were

killed fighting many were drowned in the river. Fifty six guns were lost to the enemy.³⁷

The loss of armour at Aliwal put the Durbar army on the defensive. Its generals were uncertain where the enemy would cross the Sutlej and so they split their forces. To check the enemy advance on Lahore, the larger portion of the army was entrenched in a horse shoe curve of the Sutlej near village Sabraon this was under the command of the traitor, Tej Singh. The other traitor, Lal singh, posted himself a little higher up the river ostensibly to prevent an attack on Amritsar.³⁸

Punjabi entrenchments at Sabraon were on the left bank of the Sutlej with a pontoon bridge connecting them with their base camp. Their big guns were placed behind high embankments and consequently immobilized for offensive action. The infantry was also posted behind earthworks and could not, therefore, be deployed to harass the enemy.

Gough and Hardinge decided to make a frontal assault on Sabraon and destroy the Durbar army at one blow. This was

undoubtedly planned with confidence that the Sikh commanders were on their side.³⁹

On February 7 it began to rain. For the next two days the downpour continued unabated, and the Sutlej rose more than seven inches, making all fords quite unfordable only one rickety pontoon bridge connected the army encamped on the left bank with its base. Gough was quick to seize the opportunity. As soon as the rain stopped, he marched out of Ferozepur and under cover of darkness, took his position at Sabraon.⁴⁰

On the morning of February 10 a heavy mist spread from the river over the rain sodden fields, enveloping both contending armies. When the sun broke through the mist, the Punjabis found themselves encircled between two horse shoes facing them were the British and behind them was the Sutlej now in spate. After a preliminary artillery duel, British cavalry made a feint to check on the exact location of Panjabi guns. The cannonade was resumed, and in two hours British guns put the Durbar artillery out of action. Then the British charged Punjabi entrenchments from three sides.⁴¹

Tej Singh fled across the pontoon bridge and had it destroyed. But most of the other generals stayed to fight. The most famous of them was Sham Singh Attariwala, who rallied the Punjabis in a last desperate stand against the enemy. Those who tried to escape were drowned in the swirling waters of the Sutlej. Nearly 10000 Punjabis lost their lives in the action. All their guns were either captured or abandoned in the river. It was a complete and crushing defeat.⁴²

Lord Gough described Sabraon as the Waterloo of India. He paid tribute to the Punjabis. Policy precluded me publicly recording my sentiments on the splendid gallantry of our fallen foe, or to record the acts of heroism displayed, not only individually, but almost collectively, by the Sikh sardars and the army and I declare were it not from a deep conviction that my country's good required the sacrifice, I could have wept to have witnessed the fearful slaughter of so devoted a body of men.⁴³

John as commissioner ruled the Jullundur Doab; George at Peshawar controlled hazara and the Derajat. British officers were posted at strategic points on the pretext of redrawing the state boundaries and helping durbar officials in their duties. The young

maharajah and his durbar were merely decorative facade of a kingdom that had ceased to exist except in name.⁴⁴

The British experienced some difficulty in enforcing the treaties they had made with the durbar and Gulab Singh Dogra. Henry Lawrence had to lead a force to Kangra to compel the surrender of the fort. The situation in Kashmir was even more tricky. Sheikh Imamuddin, the governor, received orders from the durbar to hand over the administration to Gulab Singh Dogra. At the same time he received a secret note from Raja Lal Singh (who had been chagrined by the British Government's generosity to Gulab Singh) advising him to resist Dogra intrusion.⁴⁵

The Shaikh, who had hoped to be confirmed in his post, expelled the Dogras sent against him. Once again Henry Lawrence had to compel obedience. Sheikh Imamuddin did not offer any resistance to the resident, and along with the reins of office he handed over the secret missives he had received from Raja Lal Singh. Raja Lal Singh was tried by a British court, found guilty of duplicity and exiled from the Punjab. Tej Singh replaced him as the chief notable of the Durbar.

In December 1846, Lord Hardinge came to the Punjab. In the manner of empire-builders, he made the sardars gifts of watches (few of them could read the time) and arranged for the Durbar to submit a written request that the British force continue to be stationed in the Punjab till 1854, when Dalip Singh would come of age.⁴⁶

The Treaties of Lahore of March 1846 were replaced by a new one which was ratified at Bhairowl.⁴⁷ By the terms of this treaty the British Government undertook the maintenance of the administration and the protection of the maharajah during his minority. The resident was given full authority over all matters, in every department of the state. The governor general was empowered to occupy with British soldiers such positions as he thought necessary for the security of the capital, for the protection of the maharajah, and for the preservation of the peace of the country. In short the British resident was made independent of the council of regency and elevated to the position of a governor. Rani Jindan was deprived of all power and pensioned off with 1.5 lac rupees per annum.⁴⁸

Administrative changes introduced by the conquerors both in the annexed territories and in those they administered in the name of

the Durbgar are worthy of attention. In the Jullundur Doab, consisting of the districts of Jullundur, Hoshiarpur, and Kangra, John Lawrence introduced land reforms which had far reaching economic and political consequence.⁴⁹ He found a baffling variety of land holdings ranging from those of the hill chiefs with troops of armed retainers which they were under obligation to furnish to the Durbar when required, estates of descendants of the majha misldars and of the Bedi and Sodhi descendants of the Gurus religious endowments, grants by sanads, and grants to officials in rewards for services to the state, etc.

John Lawrence confirmed the hill chiefs in their estates, but both in their cases and in those of jagirdars he comuted the obligation to furnish troops into cash payment. He also ordered the demolition of most of the forts in the region.

As regards the other jagirs, he laid down the rule that all grants made after the death of maharajah Sher Singh or made by unauthorised persons such as nazims and kardars were to be resumed. The most important jagirs were those granted by the Durbar to its loyal servants. Johan Lawrence was strongly of the opinion that this class of jagirdars was now idle, useless, disloyal, and always

drones except when opportunity allows them to be wasps to sting us.⁵⁰ John Lawrence's measures, though largely beneficial to the peasant proprietors, adversely affected the land owning class. They also caused uneasiness in Lahore circles as Trans Sutlej chiefs owned large estates in the Jullundur Doab. The chiefs realized that if the British took the rest of the Punjab, they would be deprived of whatever jagirs remained to them.

As important as the disposal of the jagirs was the fixing of land revenue. John Lawrence made a summary settlement for three years which, thought lighter than the Durbar's assessment, caused hardship because payment was demanded in cash instead of in agricultural produce. He also made revenue settlements directly with representatives of village communities, thus bypassing chaudharis and lambardars, who were in consequence deprived of the privilege of rent free lands. The revenue officials became as disgruntled as the jagirdars.⁵¹

In the Punjab that remained nominally under the Durbar, the resident proposed similar changes. Henry Lawrence tried to carry the Durbar with him his brother John, who acted for him for a while, did

not bother to do that. The Durbar's dominions were divided into four judicial districts, each under a judge. Each judge was given a deputy and provided with troops to enforce his orders. The judges were to hear appeals from the decisions of kardars and were empowered to decide civil and criminal cases.⁵² British officers superintended the functioning of these courts. Johan Lawrence had the code of criminal law operative in British India printed at Lahore (a lithograph press had been set up in the capital in January 1848) and circulated to judicial officers. The Summary land settlement that John had introduced in the Jullaudus Doab was later introduced in the Durbgar's territories.⁵³

It did not take Rani Jindan and the Durbar chiefs long to realize that they had dissipated Ranjit Singh's kingdom, two thirds of it had been divided between the invader and the upstart, Dogra, and in the third that remained the writ that ran was that of the feringhee. They had looked to the British to protect their persons and properties from the rapacity of the Khalsa army. The British had saved them from the army but had exacted a heavy price for doing so. In the new dispensation, the Durbar was shorn of all power, and the economic supremacy of landed aristocracy was seriously jeopardized. Rani

Jindan was most perturbed with the way things were going and began to meddle in affairs of state.

The resident was dismayed to find that such was the magic of the name of Ranjit Singh that the people overlooked the past misdeeds of his widow and acclaimed her as their queen mother. It became- necessary for the resident to remove her from the scene. An excuse was provided when, at a formal ceremony to honour nobles, Dalip Singh refused to put the saffron mark on the forehead of Raja Tej Singh. The resident saw the hand of Jindan behind the episode and two days later ordered her removal to Sheikhupura. She was according to the complaint, dragged out by the hair to be taken to the fort plaint, her allowance was reduced to less than a third.

The outraged queen protested, Surely, royalty was never treated the way you are treating us Instead of being secretly king of the country, why don't you declare yourself so. You talk about friendship and then put us in prison. You establish traitors in Lahore, and then at their bidding you are going to kill the whole of the Punjab.⁵⁴

A strict guard was placed on Jindan. But the more restrictions and dishonor the British heaped on Jindan, the more she became a heroine in the eyes of the people. Most chieftains openly expressed their sympathy for ther.⁵⁵ Bhai Maharaj Singh, who had succeeded Bhai Bir Singh at Naurangabad and was held in as great esteem as his predecessor by the peasantry and nobility, acclaimed her. The bhai was arrested by order of the resident but escaped from custody. He eluded the police and addressed large meetings in central Punjab, exhorting the people to rise and expel the feringhee.⁵⁶

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Second Anglo Sikh War

Lord Hardinge handed over the reins of office in January 1848, assuring this successor that it should not be necessary to fire a gun in India for some years to come. Hardinge's policy of bolstering a friendly but subservient Sikh (or Sikh-cum Dogra) state as a break water against central Asian Mohammedanism had foundered on the rocks of the Sikhs refusal to be friend the British and be as hostile to the Pathans and the Afghans as was hoped. Hardinge was succeeded by a haughty young aristocrat, Lord Dalhousie.

The mounting unrest in the Punjab gave the young laird the chance to re orientate British policy towards the Durbar. Instead of only weakening the Sikh state, he believed in grasping all rightful opportunities of acquiring territory or revenue as may from time to time present themselves. The opportunity was not long in coming and at an opportune moment. Henry Lawrence, who was against encroachment on the Durbar's powers, was away in England on sick leave. His

brother, Johan, and Edward Currie, who acted as residents in his absence, belonged to dalhouies's expansionist school.¹

The trouble began at Multan. Dewan Mulraj, was assessed by the resident to pay 20 lacs of rupees for his province. At the same time the district of Jhang, which formed a third of his estate, was taken from him. Mulraj agreed to these terms but was unbolt to fulfill them because the resident had abolished excise duty on goods transported by river, which formed a substantial part of the income of Multan. Mulraj also resented his judgments being reviewed by the resident. He submitted his resignation in December 1847.² The resignation was accepted, but the dewan was persuaded to continue in office till March 1848 by which time the winter harvest would be gathered.

General Kahan Singh Man was chosen to succeed Mulraj. Two British officers, Vans Agnew of the civil service and Lieutenant Anderson were sent down by river to superintend the take over.³ The Durbar party encamped outside the fort. The next day Mulraj welcomed Kahan Singh Man and the Englishmen, showed them round the fort, and formally presented them with the keys of the citadel. The Multan garrison was discharged, and the Durbar troops took over. As

the Englishmen were passing out through the gate of the fort on their way back to camp, they were assaulted.

In the melee that ensued, Vans Agnew, Lieutenant Anderson, and a few others were injured. Mulraj rode back to get help and sent a note to the Durbar camp regretting the incident. Vans Agnew acknowledged the dewan's note and exonerated him from all responsibility for the assault. He also sent a report to the do with it. I was riding with him when we were atand General Van Corlandt, who were at Dera Fateh Khan and Dera Ismail Khan, respectively.⁴

The disbanded soldiery of Multan forced Mulraj to become their leader. They appealed to the Durbar troops to join them n expelling the feringhee. With the exception of Kahn Singh Man and dozen or so others, the Durbar troops went over the the Multains. The next evening they mobbed the British camp and killed Vans agnew and Lieutenant Anderson. Sikh soldiers issued an appeal to their co-religionists in the Punjab.⁵

Now we, in accordance with the guru's command, have written to all of you, or Khalsa brethren. Those of you who are true and

sincere Sikhs, will come to us here. You will receive pay, and will be received honourably in the durbar of the guru.⁶ The Maharajah Duleep Singh will, by the guru's grace, be firmly established in his kingdom, the cow and the Brahmin will be protected and our holy religion will prosper.

The Maharajah and his mother are in sorrow and affliction. By engaging in their cause, you will obtain their favour and support. Khalsaji, gird up your loins under the protection of the guru and Guru Gobind Singh will preserve your honour. Make much of a few words.
Dated 12 Baisakh 1905.⁷

So strong was the feeling against the British that within a few days the Rechna Doab and the doab between the Chenab and the Indus swarmed with Pathan and Baluch swordsmen willing to make common cause with the Sikhs to reinstate a Hindu governor against the fiat of the feringhee.⁸ The resident's immediate reaction on getting news of the attack on Vans Agnew was to order troops to Multan. But the very next day, when he heard that both Vans Agnew and Lieutenant Anderson were dead and that the Durbar troops had joined the rebels, he countermanded his order. He Summoned the council

and told it plainly that since the rebellion was against the authority of the Durbar it was up to the Durbar to suppress it. He preferred to ignore the provision of the Durbar were kept specially for preserving the peace of the country.

Members of the council confessed their inability to cope with the situation. Lord Dalhousie and his commander in chief (who pleaded that it was the wrong time of the year for English soldiers to fight in the plains) agreed with the resident to let the situation deteriorate and then exploit it to their advantage.⁹

The resident did his best to fan the flames of rebellion. Rani Jindan, who was under house arrest in Sheikhupura fort and did little besides squander money consulting soothsayers and feeding Brahmins, was ordered to be deported from the Punjab. The resident believed that, although “legal proof of the delinquency would not perhaps be obtainable,” she was deeply implicated in a conspiracy to tamper with loyalty of native soldiers.¹⁰ Despite the unanimous disapproval of the hitherto pliable council of regency, the order was carried out with due severity. Jindan was taken to Benares under

heavy armed escort, her allowance was further reduced to Rs. 1000 per month.¹¹

A wave of resentment swept over the Punjab. At the time of the Multan rebellion, there was perhaps no one who would shoulder a musket at Rani Jindan's bidding, a week after she had been removed from the state, there were few who would not lay down their lives for her sake.¹² The resident admitted to the governor general. The Khalsa soldiery on hearing of the removal of the maharani were much disturbed they said that she was the mother of all the Khalsa and that as she was gone and the young Dalip Singh in our hands they had no longer anyone to fight for an uphold... Even Amir Dost Mohammed of Afghanistan, expressed sympathy with the people of the Punjab.¹³

The banishment of Jindan shook the confidence that the Durbar notables had placed in the British. Till this time they had been loyal because the British had saved them from the Khalsa army, guaranteed their possessions and privileges, and given them a sense of security.¹⁴ But the removal of Jindan and the confiscation of the jagirs of those suspected of too close an association with her caused them to question their attitude towards their protectors.

The family most concerned were the Attariwalas because Chattar Singh's daughter was engaged to maharajah Dalip singh. They overlooked the slights offered to Jindan in the hope that if all went well and Attariwala would become maharani of the Punjab and they would become the most powerful family in the state. Although both the aging Chattar Singh, who was nazim in the north west frontier districts, and his son, Sher Singh, who was a member of the Council of Regency, tacitly acquiesced in the expulsion of Jindan, they too began to suspect that the British had no intention of restoring the Punjab to Maharajah Dalip Singh when he came of age.¹⁵

The policy of deliberate inactivity did not percolate down to the junior officers, among whom the most enterprising was Lieutenant Edwards who as we have noted earlier, received Vans Agnew's note at Dera Fateh Khan. He did not wait for orders but asked Van Cortlandt to join him in his march on Multan.¹⁶ He raised levies from the neighboring Muslim tribes as he went along. He crossed the Indus and occupied Leiah, then he withdrew from Leiah and captured Mangrota. In mid-may he and Van Cortlandt captured Dera Ghazi Khan and approached Multan from the south. Edwardes spirited moves shamed the resident to action. He ordered General Whish and

Sher Singh Attariwala to Multan and induced the nawab of Bahawalpur to join in the assault.¹⁷

Mulraj fought an engagement with the Bahawalpuris at Kineri and then withdrew. Edwardes and Van Corlandt joined forces with the Bahawalpuris, pursued Mulraj, and inflicted another defeat on him at Sadosam. Mulraj was compelled to withdraw to Multan. With the Durbar troops coming down from the north, and with Lake, Edwards, and Van Cortlandt in full pursuit from the south, Mulraj's time seemed to be running out.¹⁸

Bhai Maharaj Singh came to the beleaguered dewan's rescue. At the time of Jindan's deportation, he had been active in Majha. When he heard of the revolt in Multan, he proceeded southwards with his followers. He exhorted the people to join Mulraj's colours and assured them that it was written in the sau sakhi that in sambat 1905 (1848) the Khalsa would regain sovereignty in the Punjab.¹⁹

Durbar troops were sent in pursuit of Bhai Mahahraj Singh. They overtook him near the Chenab and inflicted heavy casualties on his followers. The bhai managed to escape and joined Mulraj. His

arrival raised the flagging spirits of the dewan who was elevated from the status of a reluctant rebel to a national hero. What had been a local rebellion became a war of independence. From all over the Punjab came reports of troops declaring for Mulraj.²⁰

The attariwalas turned against the British only when their suspicion that the British did not mean to honour the terms of the Treaty of Bhairowal turned to certainty. At the instance of his father, Sher Singh persuaded Lieutenant Edwardes to write to the resident to fix a date for the marriage of Dalip Singh.

The Attariwalas felt that the response would indicate how the minds of British officials were working. The resident promised to consider the matter but ended his note with words that could scarcely have reassured the attariwalas. He wrote I do not see how proceeding with the ceremonies of the maharajah's nuptials can be considered as indicative of any line of policy which the government may consider it right to pursue now or at any future time in respect of the administration of the Punjab.²¹

Soon after his unsatisfactory reply, the relations between Chattar Singh Attariwal and Captain Abbott, who was meant to assist him, became extremely strained. Early in August 1848 without any provocation Abbott roused the Muslim tribes against the Sikhs. The tribesmen threatened to attack Haripur. For his own safety, Chattar Singh Attariwala ordered Colonel Canora to evacuate the fort for him. Canora refused to comply unless Abbott confirmed the order.²² The Attariwala ordered his troops to occupy the fort by force. Canora was killed while trying to fire on the Attariwala's troops. Abbott charged Chattar Singh with cold blooded murder. The resident was constrained to reprimand Captain Abbott, but a few days later he confirmed the order of a subordinate investigating officer sequestering Chattar Singh's jagirs and suspending him from the post of nazim. Chattar Singh, old and sick as he was had no option but to fight against the wrong done to him. He opened negotiations with Amir Dost Mohammed and his brother Sultan Mohammed. They agreed to support the Sikhs against the British, provided Peshawar and the proached his friend Gulab Singh Dogra for help. The Dogra marched his troops up and down the Punjab Frontier, keeping both the Sikhs and the British guessing about his real intentions.²³

At Multan, Sher Singh attariwala hear do the way the resident had treated his aged father but refrained from taking a precipitate his aged father but refrained from taking a precipitate step on September9, he fought alongside the British later when he had reason to believe that the British planned to kidnap hi, he left the British camp with his troops.²⁴ The next day he issued a proclamation.

It is well known to all the inhibitions of the Punjab, to all the Sikhs, and those who have cherished the Khalsa and in fact the world at large, with what oppression, tyranny and violence, the feringhees have treated the widow of the great Maharajah Ranjit Singh and what cruelty they have shown towards the people of the country.²⁵

Sher singh offered to join Mulraj. The dewan's suspicions had been aroused by a forged letter which the British contrived to let fall into his hands– in this letter sher singh was mentioned as privy to a plot to take multan by stratagem– and Mulraj refused to admit Sher Singh in the fort in sheer disgust sher singh left multan to go to the assistance of his father.

The defection of the attariwalas was a signal for other sardars to declare for freedom. Thus did a minor fracas develop into a national revolt. Only at Lahore; Raja Tej Singh and a few of the same ilk held durbar in the name of a hapless minor and did as they were bid by the feringhee.²⁶

Lord Dalhousie was pleased with the course of events because it gave him the excuse he was waiting for. the insurrection in Hazara has made great head. I should wish nothing better. I can see no escape from the necessity of annexing this infernal country. I have drawn the sword and the time thrown away the scabbard. He received the news of sher singh; s defection with unconcealed pleasure because it had brought matters to the crisis the he had for months been waiting. He noted, ‘we are now not on there of, but in the midst of war with the Sikh nation and kingdom of Punjab. 27 Before leaving Calcutta; Dalhousie made the declaration of war in his usual forthright manner. ‘unwarned by precedents, un-influenced by example, the sikh nation has called for war and on my word, sir, they shall have it with a vengeance, he discreetly refrained from including the durbar in his pronouncement so that British reinforcements could enter Lahore

territories not as enemy to the constituted government but to restore order and obedience.²⁸

It was an unequal contest. Under the terms of the treaties of Lahore, 1846 most of the Punjabi guns had been surrendered and their army reduced to 20000 infantry and 12000 cavalry. The peasantry had been disarmed. The British on the other hand had massed 50000 trained soldiers along the Sutlej, cantoned 9000 in Lahore and another 9000 at Ferozepur. Many of the most powerful forts, Lahore, Kangra, Sheikhpura were in their hands.²⁹

The situation in November 1848 was somewhat as follows. The chaj and the sind sagar doabs had declared for freedom, the other doabs were under the British. There were two centres of resistance-one led by the attariwalas in the northwest, the other by mulraj in the south.³⁰ Sher Singh Attariwala passed close by Lahore the rising of citizens that he expected did not take place. He heard of Lord Gough's advance to Lahore and retreated northwards to hold the British on the Chenab.³¹

Gough marched up to the Chenab and came in sight of the Attariwal's forces on the opposite bank. The Punjabis crossed the river, captured the fort of Ramnagar, and repulsed a British force under General Campbell which attacked them. Lord Gough came to the relief of Campbell. British forces crossed the Chenab at two points and engaged Sher Singh Attariwala in a sharp artillery duel near Village Sadullapur.³²

British superiority in fire power compelled the Punjabis to abandon their position on the Chenab and retreat to the Jhelum. They dug themselves in at a place where the intersected by deep ravines was in front of them. The British took up their position about three miles southeast of the Punjabi entrenchments. For some time the two armies remained inactive. Then the Punjabis began to run short of provisions and tried to draw out the enemy from their position.³³

News from other fronts induced the combatants to start hostilities on the Jhelum. Chattar Singh Attariwala had liberated Attock and sent whatever troops he could spare and promised to join his son in an attack on the enemy. The British received even a greater fillip with the news from Multan. A British cannonball had fallen on the

magazine in the fort, blowing up 400000 defenders. The tide of battle had turned in favour of the British. They awaited the arrival of their siege guns to compel Mulraj to surrender.³⁴

The British and the Punjabis jockeyed for position. Lord Gough tried to avoid the jungle and attack the Punjabis in the flank. Sher Singh Attariwala forestalled the move and took up another formation with the ingles and ravines still separating him from the enemy.³⁵

On the afternoon of January 13, 1849, the British launched their attack. The Punjabis sighted them advancing from the direction of village Chillianwala and promptly opened fire. For an hour Punjabi guns kept the enemy at bay. When their fire slackened, the British, who had the advantage of numbers, charged in an attempt to force the Punjabis into the river. The Punjabis scattered into the brushwood jungle and began their harrying dhai phat (hit and run) tactics. The battle raged till the night enveloped both the armies. The Punjabis captured four British guns and the colours of three regiments. Chillianwala was the worst defeat suffered by the British since their occupation of India.³⁶ Next morning the Punjabi guns boomed a twenty one gun salute to a Punjabi victory.

Once again, as at Ferozeshahr, the Punjabis failed to drive home their advantage. Their own losses had been considerable, and they were not aware of the magnitude of the punishment they had inflicted on the enemy. The elements also came to the rescue of the British.

As soon as the fighting stopped, it began to rain for the next three days it poured incessantly, turning the ravines which separated the Punjabis from their quarry into deep moats. On the fourth day when the sun shone again on the sodden plain, the British pulled out of Chillianwala and retreated across the Chaj to the banks of the Chenab.³⁷

The attariwalas sent George Lawrence, who was their captive, with terms for a truce. They asked for the investment of Dalip Singh as maharajah and the evacuation of British troops from the Punjab. The offer was rejected.

The Attariwalas advanced towards the Chenab and entrenched their forces in horse shoe formation between the town of Gujarat and the river. They were weaker both in guns and in man power. The

British attack began at 7:30 a.m. the Punjabis as usual opened fire too soon they exhausted their ammunition and betrayed the position of their guns.

In a cannonade lasting an hour, British guns silenced the Punjabi position. Afghan cavalry, which had joined the Punjabis, tried to defect the enemy but withdrew without achieving its purpose. The Punjabis engaged the enemy in a hand to hand combat.

In this action as well as at Chillianwala, wrote General Thackwell Seikhs caught hold of the bayonets of their assailants with their left hands and closing with their adversaries dealt furious sword blows with their right.... This circumstance alone will suffice to demonstrate the rare species f courage possessed by these men. The weight of numbers and armour decided the issue. The Punjabis till they had destroyed all they could find.³⁸

The battle of Gujarat ended organized Punjabi resistance to the feringhees. On march 11 1849, the Attariwalas formally surrendered their swords to Major General Gilbert at Hurmuck near Rawalpindi. They were followed on the 14th by the whole Sikh army. General

Thackwell described the scene. The reluctance of some of the old Khalsa veterans to surrender their arms was evident. Some could not restrain their tears while on the faces of others, rage and hatred were visibly depicted the remark of one veteran grey beard as he put down his gun summed up the history of the Punjab : Aj Ranjit Singh mar gaya – today Ranjit singh had died.³⁹

On march 29, 1849 a durbar was assembled in the fort. A proclamation was made declaring the kingdom of the Sikhs at an end. Maharajah Dalip Singh handed over the Koh-i-noor diamond and stepped down from his illustrious father's throne never to sit on it again.

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Annexation Of Punjab To British Empire And Causes Of The Defeat Of Sikhs

Lord Dalhousie did not believe in half measures. Even before the Punjabis had laid down arms, he had resolved to decimate Sikh political power.¹ The right to annex the Punjab is beyond cavil, he wrote. He had, however, to contend with the opinions of some senior colleagues, notably Henry Lawrence, who had hurried back from England and resumed his post as resident. Henry Lawrence was against annexation.

John Lawrence was with Dalhausie in holding that the case for annexation was both undeniable and pressing Lord Hardinge and later the Court of Directors of the East India Company also backed Dalhausie.² Assured of this support, the governor general instructed Henry Lawrence to draft the proclamation of annexation. Henry did not have his heart in the job, and he also desired to accept personally the surrender of Dewan Mulraj. When Dalhausie reacted strongly to

Henry's draft and his wish to appear as the arbiter of the Punjab's destiny.³ Henry put in his resignation. He persuaded by his friends to withdraw it and, despite being overruled and snubbed, agreed to carry out the orders of the governor general, Dalhousie ordered the removal of Maharajah Dalip Singh from the Punjab.⁴

The Sikh flag was lowered, the Union Jack hoisted on the ramparts of the Lahore fort, Sikh currency, of which there were many varieties was withdrawn, and the company's sicca rupee introduced.⁵

Demilitarising the Punjab

The Punjab's cities and villages were placarded with notices demanding the surrender of arms. More than 120000 stands of arms of matchlocks, swords, and other weapons were voluntarily handed over. A muster of the Durbar's forces was called at Lahore. A small number of troops were retained the rest of the army was disbanded. Forts and defensive fortifications practically every Punjabi village had defensive bastions were leveled. The only part of the erstwhile kingdom which was not demilitarized was the district of Peshawar. (The exception was made on the ground that there was not a large

enough British force to defend the people of the area from the incursions of tribal raiders). All military grants were abolished.⁶

Board of Control

There were diverse views on the sort of government that would best suit the Punjab. Sir Charles Napier, who had taken over as commander in chief from Lords Gough, was of the opinion that the Punjab, like Sindh, should have military rule. Others believed that, like the rest of India, it should be ruled by civilians.

Lord Dalhousie decided to combine the two by giving the Punjab a civil administration manned by both civilian and army officers. He established a Board of Administration consisting of three members.⁷ Henry Lawrence was appointed president and entrusted with matters connected with defense and relations with the sardars. John Lawrence was put in charge of the settlement of land and other fiscal matters. C. G. Mansel was entrusted with the administration of justice and the police. These three thus constituted the heart, the backbone, and the arm of the Punjab's body-politic. The Board was

made the final court of appeal with powers of life and death. It was also charged with regulating matters of excise, revenue, and police.⁸

You shall have the best men in India to help you wrote Dalhousie to Henry Lawrence. He sent to the Punjab the most experienced Englishmen available in India of the 56 covenanted officers, 29 were from the army and 27 from the civil service. The policy Henry Lawrence followed was to rule by strength rather than precision. Every civil functionary from a member of the Board down to the humblest kardar was vested with judicial fiscal, and magisterial powers.⁹

Two regions, the Cis Sutlej and the Trans Sutlej, were reunited to the Punjab. The punja along with the Trans Indus territories which were placed under the same administration comprised of an area of about 73000 square miles. Its population was roughly estimated at 10 Million.

The Punjab was divided into seven divisions or commissionerships, which were further divided into districts (of which there were 25 in the province). A five tiered administration was set up.

Next to the Board were the commissioners of the seven divisions. Below the commissioners were deputy and assistant commissioners and below them, extra assistant commissioners a cadre specially constituted to provide jobs for such natives as might have filled officers of trust under the Durbar. The lowest grade of gazette officer was the tehsildar whose civil powers extended to deciding cases up to the value of Rs. 300.¹⁰

The Board at work

Defense was given top priority. The Guide corps, which had been raised by Henry Lawrence in 1846, was increased in strength and included troops of horse as well as infantry. Recruits were drawn from the toughest elements in the country, professional hunters and even brigands were accepted. The Guides were charged with guarding the chain of fortresses which were built to prevent tribal incursions from the northwest and with maintaining peace in the Derajat. For internal security ten regiments, five cavalry and five infantry , were raised. absorbed in these regiments. A military police force consisting of 8000 men, largely Punjabi Mussalmans, was raised. The foot constabulary was meant to guard treasuries and

goals, the mounted police to patrol highways. A secret intelligence service police comprised of informers and detectives was attached to the police to keep the government in touch with the political temper of the people. Also attached to the police were professional trackers (pagi, khoji or khure pat), who brought with them their uncanny gifts for following spoors of missing cattle over long, dusty tracks.¹¹

The old village watch and ward was revived. Village watchmen chawkidars continued to be employed by the villagers but were expected to keep the police informed of the movements of strangers.

These new units of the police and the army numbered over 50000 men. Special precautions were taken in policing the Majha, where Bhai Maharaj Singh and his two colleagues, Colonel Rachpal Singh and Narain Singh, were reported to be action.¹²

Once the peace of the province was assured, the Board started on a programme of public works. The Grand Trunk Road from Peshawar to Delhi was re opened work was started on connecting the bigger cities and military outposts.¹³

The Punjab had a fairly extensive network of canals. The Public Works department cleared the Hasli (which supplied water to the many temple tanks in Amritsar and the Shalamar Gardens in Lahore) made plans to extend it and to dig branch canals. Trees were planted on the banks of canals and alongside roads. Rest houses (dak bungalows) were built to accommodate officials on tour. A programme of afforestation of barren lands was taken in hand. In the districts of Lahore, Gurdaspur, and Gujranwala, a million saplings were planted. These included as many as ninety different varieties of timber. Large tracts were set apart as grasslands rakh. Land holders were encouraged to plant trees, and coppice lands were exempted from taxation.¹⁴

The board's greatest contribution, however, was in improving the condition of the agriculturists who formed the vast bulk of the population. New varieties of crops were introduced. New Orleans cotton, sugar can, flax, tobacco, and a variety of root crops began to be grown in the plains; tea was planted on the slopes of the Murree hills and in the Kangra Valley. The Punjab had already a large number of mulberry trees, the import of silk worms gave sericulture a boost.

Italian merino rams were crossed with local breeds with beneficial results for both the yield of meat and wool.¹⁵

The full impact of the changes in the system of revenue introduced by John Lawrence when he was acting resident was now felt. Despite the reduction in the rate of assessment, revenue from land increased from 130 lacs of rupees in 1849 to 160 lacs in 1851. The Board was able to show a balance sheet with surpluses of 102 and 96 lac respectively, for the first two years in which it administered the province.¹⁶

Steps to regularize taxes had also been initiated before annexation. The Durbar had as many as 48 different kinds of levy and maintained innumerable octroi posts. The Board confirmed the abolition of all internal duties and built a chain of octroi posts on the frontiers to collect taxes on imports. Excise was levied on spirits and drugs tolls were charged on ferries the salt mines were taken over and instead of being farmed out to contractors were exploited by the stat itself with a levy of Rs. 2 per maund. The Boards more than made up the loss of revenue from the abolition of internal levies by introducing stamp duty on civil suits.¹⁷ Thus the complicated tax structure of the

Durbar, which yielded only 16 lac per year, Was simplified and yet made to yield a quarter of lac more. It also had the further advantage of saving the common man from the caprice of officials.¹⁸

Evil practices such as the destruction of female children on birth, sati, etc. were forbidden. Marriage customs, dowry, divorce were modified to ameliorate hardship on women. Rules of inheritance of property were recognized. Since the tehsildar was the only official conversant with these rules and customs, he was entrusted with the necessary judicial powers. Village pancayats were allowed to function in less important matters affecting the village community. In cities, town councils were constituted to advise and assist English magistrates on civil matters.¹⁹

The Board discovered to its surprise that the incidence of literacy was higher in the erstwhile Punjab kingdom than in some British provinces the Punjab had many elementary schools, including 16 for girls in Lahore. The Board allowed the native madrasas to function and in addition set up a number of central schools for higher education in the bigger cities. It also decided to continue the use of

Persian cities. It also decided to continue the use of Persian for official records in the new annexed region and Urdu for eastern Punjab.²⁰

The administration by the Board was an unqualified success. It brought peace and prosperity to the country which had passed through ten years of civil strife.²¹ In August 1852 the Board presented a report on its work I the first two Years. It stated with pride that in no part of India had there been more perfect quiet than in the territories lately annexed. It also complimented the people it had to deal with. There are less prejudices and elements of hindrance in the Punjab than elsewhere. Sikh fanaticism is dying out, the Hindus are less superstitious and priest ridden and the Mohammedans less bigoted and less bound by traditional practice than their co religionists in any part of India company felicitated the Board for the prosperous and happy result.²²

How did the change affect the Sikh community. The succession of defeats in the field of battle in addition to the knowledge of betrayal of national interests disillusioned the Sikh rank and file with the royal family and the aristocracy. Consequently much as Bhai Maharaj Singh was respected, he was unable to arouse enthusiasm among the

masses to continue fighting for the durbar when he was arrested and deported to Singapore, there was hardly any agitation among the Sikhs.²³

Dalhousie expelled the royal family and liquidated the Sikh nobility of the Trans Sutlej region. Sikh peasants and soldiers were suspect and given little chance for employment in the army or the police force, both of which were largely Muslim. Under the circumstances it was not very surprising that the militant spirit of the disbanded Khalsa soldiery (over 40000 of whom were let loose after the Anglo Sikh wars) turned to crime.²⁴ The central districts of the Punjab became infested with dacoits, almost all of whom were Sikhs. Thuggee became rampant most of the fraternity being either Mazhabi or Sainsi Sikhs. The government was constrained to appoint a superintendent for the suppression of thuggeeism, and the crime was put down with a firm hand.²⁵

The most important effect of annexation was the new relationship between Sikhs and Hindus.²⁶ It has already been noted that, from the time the Khalsa became a political power, large numbers of Hindus, who had looked upon it as the spearhead of

Hinduism, had nominally accepted the pahul (baptism).²⁷ During Sikh rule the distinction between Sikh and Hindu became one of mere form they did not. For the rest, Brahmanical Hinduism had come back into its own.²⁸ The new Sikh Jat nobility aped the practices of Hindu Rajput princes; they worshipped Hindu gods alongside their own Granth, venerated the cow, went on pilgrimages to Hindu holy places, fed Brahmins, consulted astrologers and soothsayers, and compelled widows to immolate themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands. Among certain sections, notably the Bedis, the caste to which Guru Nanak had belonged, the practice of killing female children on birth had been revived.²⁹

As soon as power passed out of Sikh hands, large numbers of Hindus who had adopted the practices of the Khalsa abandoned them to return to orthodox Hinduism, With them went a considerable number of those who had been Khalsa for several generations.³⁰ In the two short visits that Lord Dalhousie made the Punjab he was able to detect this tendency.

Their great Guru Govind sought to abolish caste and in a great degree succeeded, noted the governor general. They are however,

gradually relapsing into Hinduism, and even when they continue Sikhs, they are yearly Hindooified more and more so much so that Mr. now Sir Geo. Clerk (governor of Bombay, 1847-48) used to say that in 50 years the sect of the Sikhs would have disappeared. There does not seem to be warrant for this view though it is much more likely now than six months ago.³¹

Break-up of the Board

The differences between Henry Lawrence and his brother, John, had often strained relations to the breaking point.³² (Montgomery confessed that he had to serve as a regular buffer between two high powered engines)³³ In these disputes Lord Dalhousie openly showed preference for John and often went out of the way to belittle Henry. The conflict came to a head when both brothers put in their resignations. Dalhousie promptly abolished the Board, transferred Henry Lawrence to Rajputana, and appointed Johan Lawrence chief commissioner of the Punjab.³⁴ This change was more one of form than of substance as John continued to be assisted by two principal commissioners. Montgomery remained in charge of the judiciary as

well as education, roads, police, local and municipal administration. George Edmonstone was appointed financial commissioner.³⁵

Once John Lawrence was left to himself, he began to see the wisdom in the policies which his brother had advanced and he (John) had opposed. His handling of jagirs and rent free tenures of which over 60000 still remained to be decided, was liberal enough to evoke a sharp rebuke from the governor general. The most important aspect of John Lawrence's administration was his success in winning over the Sikh masses. When he was convinced that the Sikh peasantry had little sentiment for the restoration of a Sikh state, he allowed them to be recruited for the army. The peasants joined the Company's forces with enthusiasm. Their performance in the skirmishes against Pathan tribesmen and in the Anglo-Burmese War (1852) encouraged the British commanders to enlist them in larger numbers.

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Conclusion

With the fall of sikh kingdom, the new entrants to the Sikh fold started wavering in their loyalty to Sikhism. The Sikh had hardly had peace for one generation, some of these new entrants reverted to Hinduism and its old prejudices and practices. Still there were many for whom the border line between Hinduism and Sikhism became very thin and vague and they kept unsurely on the border line between Hinduism and Sikhism. In their outlook, character and behavior they stood clearly apart from the main segment of the Sikh society who had clear identity.

The later traced their lineage from the Guru period and had inherited the florious tradition of martyrdom for the cause of righteousness. With the emergence of the British as the new ruler, the relationships between Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs under went a complete change. In Punjab the Hindus, who had looked upon the Sikhs as their protectors against the Muslims and were partners in power during the years of triumphs under Ranjit Singh, showed hardly

any commitment towards Sikhism that had successfully fought battles for liberty and freedom of the land and its people. With both the Muslim threat and the Sikh kingdom gone, the external pressures that had held them seemingly close to Sikhism disappeared.

They had to redefine their mutual relationship. Apart from this the role of some members of the Hindu elites during the period of annexation some gap between the two communities. It is note worthy that the Hindu Dogras and Purbias during the crucial Anglo-Sikh wars deserted the Khalsa army. On the other had, the Muslim part of the Khalsa army fought against the British till the end tears at the defeat of Sarkar-i-Khalsa were shed by Shah Muhammad, the celebrated Muslim poet.

The British looked upon the Sikhs as enemies and initiated a policy aimed at the suppression of the War like Sikhs with the help of an army of occupation comprising 60000 soldiers and police force of 15000 largely manned by the Punjabi Muslims. Special precautions were taken in policing the Majha area, where Bhai Mahraj Singh and Narain Singh were reported to be active. The royal house of the Sikhs was completely destroyed. It is well known that Maharani Jindan

called the mother of the Khalsa whom the British considered to be the root cause of all trouble, was treated very shabbily and was forced to leave the country.

The minor Maharaja Dalip Singh was made to resign for himself his heirs and successors, all right. Title and claim to the sovereignty of the Punjab or to any sovereign power whatever. The Koh-i-Noor, considered by Dalhousie as a historical emblem of conquest in India, was presented to the Queen of England.

The government confiscated all the valuables, including the antiques of the Sikh Wars. Some of them were exiled from Punjab and others were kept under surveillance in their own had fought against the British in the two Anglo Sikh wars. Some of them were exiled from Punjab and others were kept under surveillance in their own houses. They were not allowed to keep arms in their possession. Forts and defensive fortification practically every Sikh village had defensive bastions were leveled. All military grants to the Sikh Sardars were abolished. Henry Lawrence, as head of the Board of Control responsible for the administration of Punjab, recommended slight leniency towards the Sikh nobility. He thought and argued that it was

most impolitic and dangerous to deprive them of their rights unfairly. But he was over ruled by Governor General Dalhausie, who in pursuance of his imperialistic policies, thought, that the Jagirdars deserved little but maintenance. Henry Lawrence tendered his resignation over this issue.

Nearly 50000 Sikh soldiers were disbanded. Hardly a tenth of the old army of Punjab was taken into the British pay. Although the term Sikh was used for the re-employed soldiers, few were in fact Sikhs. They were largely Punjabi Muslims, Gurkhas and Hindustanis of the Durbar Army. The British officers looked upon the Sikh soldiers with suspicion. They were called dirty sepoys and many officers wished them to cut their hair forgetting that the very essence of Sikhism lies in its locks. D. Petrie, an Assistant Director, Criminal Intelligence, Government of India, in a Confidential report on the Development of Sikh Politics(1900-1911) wrote.

The British adopted a very strict and rigid policy detrimental to the growth of Sikhism. After annexation the Golden Temple Amritsar, along with 6 other Gurdawaras and the Gurdawara at Tarn Taran were practically controlled by the British authorities through a manager

of these Gurdawaras appointed by the British Government. The Waqf Act of 1851 gave the control and management of the holy places of the Hindus and Muslims to the communities concerned but in the case of the Sikh Gurdawars, the Act was not applied on political grounds.

The properties of Sikh places of worship were transferred and given over to the Udasi mahants and others, throughout the Punjab, A significant blow was given by the British to the Sikh religion when they conferred proprietary right to the temple mahants, Brahmins udasis or Nirmalas most of whom had Hindu leanings and hardly understood or had faith in the Sikh religion and its practices. This was an extremely subtle method by which the British sought to secure the undoing of the ideological base of the Sikhs. A committee of nine Sikh with a Government nominated sarbrah or Warden as its head was appointed. After 1883, however, the committee was quietly dropped and the whole control came to be vested in the Sarbrah who received his instructions from the Deputy Commissioner The government wanted to maintain the Gurdawaras as channels of indirect control of Sikhs.

The British rule dealt a severe blow to the socio-economic condition of the Sikh. Thousands of Sikh soldiers were rendered

jobless. Because of earlier wars and consequent disturbances, the lot of the pleasantly was no better. Instead of the Sikhs, Hindus were preferred in the civil services. Most of the jobs in military and police were given to the Punjabi Muslims. Out of the eleven Extra Assistant commissioners, appointed by the Board of Control, only one was a Sikh.

The Christian Missions which came to be established in Punjab also generated a feeling of hatred and hostility towards the Sikhs. The Charter granted in 1600 by Queen Elizabeth of England to a Colonising Company spoke of duties higher than those of Commerce. If merchants must buy and sell, they must also convert. Religious imperialism was the first phase of British colonial imperialism Christian Missions worked under British political wings. The missionaries established their centers at Amritsar, Tarn Tarna, Batala, Ludhiana and Lahore, all areas of dense Sikh population.

Many Sikh students studying in Missionary schools began to despise the religion of their forefather's some of them cut their hair and beards. The conversions of Maharaja Dalip Singh and Raja

Harnam Singh of kapurthala were serious and deliberated blows at the roots of the community.

Further, the growing success of Missionaries in their evangelical work, with the support of the Government was an overt measure against the Sikh. Sir John Lawrence used to make annual contribution of Rupees five hundred towards missionary activities. Some of the Missionaries openly condemned the Sikh institutions, tradition and Gurus. They called the Guru Granth a heathen scripture. The Administrative report (1849-51) noted. The Sikh faith and ecclesiastical policy is rapidly going where Sikh political ascendency has already gone these men joined (Sikhism) in thousands and they now desert in equal numbers the sacred tank of Amritsar is less thronged than formerly and the attendance at annual festivals is diminishing yearly. .. Gurmuki is rapidly falling into desuetude. The Punjabi as a spoken language is also losing its currency and degenerating into a merely provincial and rustic dialect. A series of discreditable manouevres, interference with the local customs feverish activity of the Christian missions and the attempts to westernize the Sikh culture filled the Sikhs with alarm.

Sikhs and Mutiny

During the Mutiny of 1857 the Muslims sought the restoration of the rule of Muslim princes and rulers and the Hindus hoped to put the Marathas rulers back into power. The princes of the two communities had a unity of purpose in putting up a common front against a common enemy, the British. Because of the earlier British repression of the Sikhs, they were too disorganized to think of putting up a united leadership to reclaim their lost kingdom.

The community was leaderless. Moreover the situation in the Punjab was quite different from the one that prevailed in the rest of India. An important and the main factor was that the Sikhs and nursed a serious grudge against the Purbias and the Dogras who, despite the Sikhs having never given them any cause for offence, had by their betrayal and other overt and covert acts, helped the British during the Anglo-Sikh wars and later in the annexation of Punjab. The British used this Sikh grievance and consequent natural hatred towards the Purbias. Kavi Kazan Singh in this work, Jangnama Dilli, written in 1858 mentions that the boast that they had vanquished the Sikhs in 1845-46 and in 1848-49. Another contemporary observer noted. The

animosity between the Sikhs and the Poorbias is notorious. The former gave out that they would not allow the letter to pass through their country.

It was therefore, determined to take advantage of this ill feeling and to stimulate it by the offer of rewards for every Hindoostanee sepoy who should be capture. The bitter memories of Purbia cooperation with the British were so fresh n the minds of the Sikhs that any coalition between the two became impossible. The people who now claimed to be fighters for freedom were the same who, eight years earlier, had actively helped the British to usurp Sikh sovereignty. The pleas of Purbias were so hallow and incongruous with their earlier conduct that they fell on defers to the aggrieved Punjabi Sikhs and Muslims whose independence they had helped the British to rob. Besides it is a well accepted view that the risings in 1857 were just revolts by the princes to regain their feudal or territorial rights.

It was far from being any ideological struggle, or for any common Indian interest. In this context the Sikhs in the background of their rule in Punjab and egalitarian tradition could hardly be expected to side with Muslims and Hindu prince to regain their kingdoms nor

could religious taboos which affected Hindu and Muslim sentiments, against many of which the Sikh Gurus had led a crusade, could in any measure inflame Sikh sentiments. It was on account of all this that the Punjab was not affected by the rebellion which convulsed the rest of northern India, Punjabi Mussalmans turned a deaf ear to their Hindustani co-religionists exhortation of Jihad against the pig eating despoilers of Islam.

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